VALLEY VOICE

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Tim Ward Looks to Continue as Tulare County District Attorney

STEVE PASTIS

Tulare County District Attorney Tim Ward says he has no plans to expand the office he has held since his appointment in December 2012. "I don't think that's really successful business model management to have that as your goal. My goal, and what I hold my staff to the task of, is we're going to do more with less. We're going to become more efficient in how we do business."

Tim Ward

He is proud of several accomplishments in his brief tenure as D.A., including outreach and public education programs that "reached out to over 10,000 people in 2013," covering areas including victim witness services, domestic violence, teen dating violence, sexual assault, crimes against children, human trafficking, victim's rights, elder abuse, financial fraud, cyberbullying and the dangers of social media.

Ward hasn't released a list of endorsements "because it's early to do so," but said there are two "union-type groups" of investigators in the D.A.'s office that have endorsed him. "I'm also endorsed by the California District Attorney's Investigators Association, the statewide D.A. investigators. I'm endorsed by the Tulare County Police Chief's Association, as well as PLEMA (Professional Law Enforcement Managers Association). So I bring to the table the endorsements of the leadership of law enforcement."

His opponent, candidate Ralph Kaelble, has the endorsement of the Tulare County Sheriff's Department, the Tulare County Corrections Association and police officer associations in Visalia, Exeter, Lindsay and Dinuba.

"These police unions do not speak for the entire department," said Ward. "It's my understanding that more than a few of those groups never went to full membership vote, and the deputy sheriff's association would be one of those. It's my understanding that that vote, on behalf of an 800-person organization, was made by three, four or five members of a board.

"I believe Visalia Police Department was a similar situation; it was up to 11 or 12 people on behalf of the entire agency," he continued. "Same thing with probation department. That never went to a full membership vote."

He was asked about the termination of Kaelble and his supervisor shortly after Ward took office, and how some could perceive that action as a good political move.

"I'm going to make decisions that are in the best interests of the office of the district attorney, that may or may not be the best move politically," he replied. "I can imagine there's people out there that say politically that was a bad move or politically that was a good move. Politics don't come into play on that. I don't make any decision, especially a decision of that magnitude, without consulting

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A dry lake bed. (Credit: NOAA)

City, County and State Confront Drought Emergency

STAFF REPORTS

Visalia City Council discussed strategies at their February 3 meeting to deal with the drought emergency facing the city. Kim Loeb, natural resource conservation manager, said that the snow pack was at 15 percent of normal in the Sierras and that the farmer's allocation of water from the Central Valley Project was zero. He also pointed out that the ground water depth is at record lows and has not recovered from the dry weather of 1948.

Sheila West, a Visalia water activist, informed the council that 17 cities in California are at risk of going dry within the next six months, one of those communities being Lindsay.

While Council Members Amy Shuklian and Greg Collins supported upgrading from a stage three emergency to a stage four, the consensus was to start with public education and public outreach. Visalia's Water Conservation Ordinance has four conservation stages. The city is presently under stage 3, "Mandatory Compliance – Water Warning." In response to the drought emergency, the council could elect to implement stage 4, "Mandatory Compliance – Water Emergency."

Collins commented, "The drought is more dire than most people can appreciate." He has plans to take out his lawn and replace it with mulch because, "lawn watering is the real culprit." He also has plans to harvest the rain from his gutter pipes to keep his trees watered. Collins thought it was time to think about moving to stage 4 of mandatory conservation. "We need to get the word out to the public, do you want a green lawn or do you want to take a shower in six months?"

Vice Mayor Warren Gubler and Mayor Steve Nelsen were not as enthusiastic about implementing stage 4 just yet. The Mandatory Compliance – Water Emergency includes several penalties for residents who break the ordinance. "I think when you keep penalizing the public, it is counterproductive," said Nelsen.

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Phil Cox: State of the County

SUPERVISOR PHIL COX

In preparing for this speech during the last two months I found myself looking for the news. I read and reread the message I delivered five years ago and cannot find anything from that speech that compares to this time. There is good news and bad to share for the upcoming year, but mostly good. First I want to thank my family for their continuing support they give to me and especially my wife, Connie. In just a few months it will be five years since she discovered she had cancer. Our family surrounded us with support and love to help her through the treatment. The community offered its support also. We will always remember those who showed their support through kind notes and prayers. Here we are today at the five year mark and cancer free.

Supervisor Phil Cox

It is a pleasure working with four Supervisors who have the best interest of this county in mind. Each of them is sincere in their commitment to their districts and their conviction to serve the citizens of this county.

I asked our CAO to provide me with a spread sheet showing the change in leadership that has taken place over the past few years. Since 2004, all department heads with the exception of two have changed. We created two new departments just last year alone. Our fire and IT departments are also still relatively young.

I asked each department head to provide a list of accomplishments from last year and also to give me a goal for 2014. I would like to highlight a few of the responses I received. In 2013 the Sherriff's Department worked what seemed like non-stop hand in hand with our code enforcement and Coun-

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Artist's rendering of the playground at the new park in Terra Bella.

County Assists Setton Pistachio's Plans to Create Park in Terra Bella

STEVE PASTIS

Terra Bella is a community in south Tulare County with a population of 3,300 people. Almost 90% of its population is low to middle income. Government facilities are limited to a U.S. post office and an elementary school.

There are no public spaces, and as a result, children and families have had nowhere in town to go for recreation or sports.

This spring, however, a new three-acre park will open to serve the community of Terra Bella. The main force behind the project is Setton Pistachio of Terra Bella, Inc., and its general manager, Lee Cohen. Setton Pistachio, one of the largest pistachio growers in the U.S., is the largest employer in the area with 75% of its workforce coming from the Terra Bella/Porterville area.

"The company feels a strong tie with the community, given our 18 years operating in the area," said Cohen. "The project goal is to provide a meaningful way for Setton to

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FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

Consider the Lion

Okay, so Groundhog Day was last Sunday: the little fellow came out and, whether he saw his shadow or not, we're in for six more weeks of winter. It's like counting down the last days of an enlistment. But soon it'll be spring, when every young man's fancy will turn, like clockwork, to...the Republican war on women.

Except that's yearlong, and never-ending. Can someone tell my why these men continue to weigh in on "legitimate rape" and "birth control and the female libido?" Clearly, they'd be better served by silence on these subjects--and just let their intentions speak for themselves. Every time one of these utterances enters the news cycle I have to ask myself--Seriously? Because we don't hear the like from men on the other side of the aisle. And we certainly don't hear such talk in reverse--about men--from any women.

Here's a thought, and an especially timely one, too, with Valentine's Day approaching: Worldwide, we men should treat women much better than we do at present. And I don't mean by showering them with thoughtful presents, or a better observance of chivalry. Who among us can deny that the planet is in parlous shape? Let's let women run the whole shooting match.

Consider the lion.

I have been on safari, and seen the King of the Beasts in his natural element. What does he do? Nothing! Imagine that, gentlemen. The lion is only truly rampant on a banner; in the wild, I'm telling you, you've never seen such a bum. Think teenagers or panhandlers or winos are slackers? They are Captains of Industry stacked next to the lion. The lion knows more than a thing or two about relaxation; in fact, he lacks only the savannah equivalent of a tropical drink.

But let's first take a few quick sentences to acknowledge the nastiness--although it need not apply to us as a species. It's true that only the alpha male enjoys the life of Riley. It's true, too, that a great deal of personal combat is required to keep this fleeting and privileged position, and that the pretenders to the throne remain lone exiles until such time as they themselves are victorious in battle--only after which, when the...stepchildren...have been dispatched, can they claim their pride. Which is shorthand for being surrounded by females.

There are, surely, worse fates than this--particularly when said females are each sexually available. The lion is under no pressure to "perform." He merely goes off, at no great distance from the group, with his partner of choice for what can be days of leisurely--if perfunctory--couplings. And he's quick about it.

It's great to be the king, right?

Here's where it gets even better. Being Sire--that is, fathering or, rather, coupling--is the lion's only job. The females do all the real work. It is they who raise their young. It is they who, in collaboration, bring home the bacon. Who eats first--and the most? Why, our hero, of course. He merely arrives at the kill and bares his teeth. The females, literally, wait on him.

I therefore propose a transfer of power. A good first step would have been the ratification of the ERA when we had our chance back in the seventies. But all's not lost. It's never too late to opt out, to let things lapse, to quit. We could call it an early retirement. Imagine, gentlemen, what we could do with ourselves. There'd be no time for loafing. Just think about your favorite activities--and you'd be doing them. Just think about all the reading you've promised yourself to catch-up on.

I'd start with Lysistrata.

— Joseph Oldenbourg

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Publisher/Editor: Joseph Oldenbourg
joseph@ourvalleyvoice.com

Associate Editor/Sales: Steve Pastis (steve@ourvalleyvoice.com)

Staff:
Catherine Doe, writer (catherine@ourvalleyvoice.com)
Tony Maldonado, webmaster (tony@ourvalleyvoice.com)
April Heath Pastis, writer (april@ourvalleyvoice.com)
Louie Luna, sales (louie@ourvalleyvoice.com)

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POLITICAL FIX

CATHERINE DOE

WHO IS THAT CRAZY HOT CHICK?

Who's the newest star of California's Cougar Town? Our very own Assemblywoman Connie Conway. Not only is she running for state senate in 2018, she is engaged to a man eight years her junior. The question isn't whether she will win the election--it's if Tulare City Council Member Craig Vejvoda can keep up with her.

Why "crazy hot chick" you say? Because she is bold, blond, snagged herself a younger man, and actually wants to be the minority whip in a legislature that is dominated by Democrats. A Democratic super majority normally means that Republicans would be irrelevant, but with Ms. Conway's deft political abilities they are not.

Republicans may drop to a paltry 23 members of the assembly in this year's election, but Ms. Conway can't wave her magic wand and deliver Republican seats in a state like California. So how is it that she can keep Republicans relevant? According to the *Fresno Bee*, "As she did last year, Conway plans to buddy up to Gov. Jerry Brown as much as possible, looking for any common ground she can," which is a brilliant move. She has taken a disadvantaged position and managed to give the Republicans a voice.

Who is Gov. Brown going to have the most trouble with in passing his budget? His own party. The Democrats are pushing to restore all cuts to social programs made during the recession without securing the revenue. That means Gov. Brown will need to listen to the Republicans and might even need their votes if Democrats revolt against his budget. Who will Governor Brown be calling on to deliver these votes? Ms. Conway.

This chick's got it going on!

THE IRONY OF DISTRICT ELECTIONS

An ironic twist has come to light concerning Visalia's switching to by-district elections. Vincent Salinas, the Hispanic candidate who was a sure thing to win a city council seat in 2015 in an at-large election, has now become a huge long-shot. What would have been a fairly easy victory for him to win Councilman Bob Link's seat in 2015, had Mr. Link decided not to run, has turned into a head-to-head against Mayor Steve Nelsen. If the districts are laid out like everyone expects, Mr. Salinas and Mr. Nelsen will be in the same district. It's not that Mr. Salinas shouldn't run against the mayor, but unless the current city council somehow pushes Visalia into the Pacific Ocean, incumbents will be reelected. Mr. Salinas also made the point that not all districts are going to be up for election at the same time, but will be staggered. That means a seat from his district, which may be majority Hispanic, may not come up for election until 2018.

Thus, going to by-district elections might have the potential of keeping Hispanics out of Visalia's city council for decades.

Are you ready for ironic twist number two? Visalia is changing to by-district elections, even though neither the council nor its citizens want it, because a group of Hispanic men will sue if they don't.

REPUBLICANS RECONFIRM THEIR COMMITMENT TO WOMEN

Mike Huckabee, former governor of Arkansas, had the following comments during a speech at the Republican National Committee's winter meeting in Washington:

"I think it's time Republicans no longer accept listening to the Democrats talk about a 'war on women.' The fact is the Republicans don't have a war on women, they have a war for women, to empower them to be something other than victims of their gender.

If the Democrats want to insult the women of America by making them believe that they are helpless without Uncle Sugar coming in and providing for them a prescription each month for birth control because they cannot control their libido or their reproductive system without the help of the government, then so be it, let's take that discussion all across America."

The only discussion my husband wants to have is, where were all these women when he was in college?

THE SOUTH WILL RISE AGAIN

In last issue's Political Fix, I highlighted how all major statewide offices are held by Northerners, such as Gov. Jerry Brown, Lieutenant Gov. Gavin Newsom, and Attorney General Kamala Harris. Now it looks like the leaders of both California legislative chambers will come from Southern California.

The Speaker of the Assembly and President Pro Tem of the Senate could arguably be more powerful than all of the statewide officers. Assemblywoman Toni Akins of San Diego was chosen to take over as Assembly Speaker later this year. Kevin De Leon from Los Angeles is lined up to be President Pro Tem of the Senate but has not yet been confirmed. It will be the first time in almost 20 years that both house leaders are from the same part of the state. In 1995 The Assembly and Senate leaders were from Northern California; Bill Lockyer was Pro Tem, and Willie Brown was Speaker.

THE PERFECT CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR – REALLY

A fresh face in the Republican Party has stepped up to run for Governor of California. He is a fiscal conservative who describes himself as a social liberal who supports gay marriage and abortion rights. He has declared the status quo as unacceptable as far as the performance of California's school system and the state's poverty rates.

So what is the problem with our new dream candidate? The problem is, who the heck is Neel Kashkari? Mr. Kashkari worked for the Troubled Asset Relief Program, TARP, that helped prop up the major banks when the country teetered on the edge of financial collapse. And that's the extent of Mr. Kashkari's political experience. According to the Associated Press, "He has long felt a calling to public service."

Gee, that should get him elected. Electing a Republican who has never held political office sure worked out brilliantly the last time.

The *Fresno Bee* Editorial Board brings up a good point when saying that "Serious Republican candidates have not emerged to challenge Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom or Attorney General Kamala Harris." It's unfortunate that Mr. Kashkari doesn't strive to run for an office further down the ballot.

The silver lining is that even if he doesn't win, maybe he can become a household name and get his positions known for the next election. He also may be the type of dynamic candidate to drive conservative turnout for other Republican candidates sorely outnumbered in California's legislature. Republicans need to start working now if they are to have a viable candidate for the 2018 governor's election, and this may just be the beginning of a long political career for Mr. Kashkari.

ABEL WHO?

The "do no harm" gubernatorial candidate, Abel Maldonado, failed to drum up any enthusiasm for his campaign and pulled out of the race a few weeks ago. That leaves Assemblyman Tim Donnelly and Neel Kashkari as the Republican candidates challenging Gov. Jerry Brown.

Mr. Donnelly and Mr. Kashkari, in turn, have just been outed as not taking their civic duty to vote very seriously. According to the *Los Angeles Times,* "Assemblyman Tim Donnelly has cast a ballot in about half of the elections held since 1995, while former U.S. Treasury official Neel Kashkari has voted in roughly 60% of elections since he turned 18. Spotty voting records have dogged previous unsuccessful gubernatorial candidates, including 2010 Republican nominee Meg Whitman."

When Jean Fuller was asked at the Tulare County Library's "Getting to Know….." series who she was endorsing for governor, she said, "I'm hoping for Santa Claus to enter the race."

DEMOCRATS TO USE MINIMUM WAGE AS A WEDGE ISSUE

Needing to use any means possible to get Democrats to the polls during the 2014 non-presidential election, the party has decided to use minimum wage as a wedge issue. The Democratic strategy is to campaign to raise the federal minimum wage and put minimum wage initiatives on state ballots where there are hotly contested congressional districts. Currently, raising the minimum wage is polling at 71% in favor.

Republicans in general believe that raising the minimum wage would dampen the economic recovery and raise unemployment. But a handful of Republicans do support the policy. A possible gubernatorial hopeful, Silicon Valley multi-millionaire and registered Republican, Ron Unz, is working on putting an initiative on the California November ballot that would raise the minimum wage to $12 an hour. This is on top of the bill Gov. Jerry Brown just signed increasing California's minimum wage to $10 an hour by 2016.

Democrats believe that raising the minimum wage will lift family incomes of those living on the bottom and will reduce the poverty rate by two percent. But Mr. Unz' explanation of why he supports raising the minimum wage should really win the most votes. Walmart, and discount retailers like it, pay their employees such a meager salary that many of them qualify for food stamps and a bevy of other federal welfare programs. Everyone remembers the pictures of the donation bins asking for handouts at Walmart for their employees so they could have a Merry Christmas like everyone else.

Mr. Unz believes that making big corporations pay their fair share could save the state tens of millions of dollars in welfare payments. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Mr. Unz explained, "The reason the current system operates is that there are massive government subsidies going to these low-wage employees," he said. "Government essentially subsidizes low-wage businesses. They're getting money from the taxpayer instead of standing on their own two feet. Eliminating unfair government subsidies is a very free-market position to take," he said.

What better way to spend our tax dollars than subsidizing the billionaire owners of Walmart?

While Unz has everything to lose politically by fighting to get this initiative on the ballot, the Democrats have everything to win. Unz will alienate members of his own party who are opposed to raising the minimum wage, but the Democrats might win some too-close-to-call senate and congress seats.

Those holding down jobs that only pay the minimum wage have been living in poverty for a long time. But would the Democrats be making it a part of the 2014 election if it didn't poll well? My guess is no. With or without the polls, would Mr. Unz still try to get his minimum wage initiative on the November ballot? My guess is yes.

NUMBER OF WOMEN STEADILY DROPPING IN CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

The number of women in the California Legislature has been steadily dropping during this decade. According to the Associated Press, "the number of

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Ward

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county counsel and getting their input.

"But the reality is that if Mr. Kaelble, my opponent, wants to make this election about why someone gets terminated, he can do that. He can do that because he's never sat in department head meetings where human resource rules and county regulations are discussed, and the reasons behind them. I don't think that's what the voters of this county should have as the focus of the election. Let's talk about public safety and leading a district attorney's office, and I've got a proven track record of leadership in doing that."

Ward attended the University of Tennessee on an Army ROTC scholarship, graduating in 1988. Following graduation, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant, eventually becoming a captain. He served at Fort Irwin in the Mojave Desert, where he held positions including tank platoon leader, tank company executive officer and scout platoon leader.

Following an honorable discharge from the U.S. Army, he attended law school at Western State University College of Law in Fullerton. During this time, he interned with the Orange County District Attorney's Office and began his career as a prosecutor.

Ward joined the Tulare County District Attorney's office in 1999 as a deputy district attorney. Since then, he has held a number of special prosecution assignments such as agricultural crimes, career criminal and homicides, along with assignments to the felony trial, juvenile and Porterville divisions.

He was promoted to supervising deputy district attorney in 2005 and supervised both the juvenile and Porterville divisions. He also supervised the operations division, consisting of the support staff, I.T., fiscal, special programs and victim advocate units.

In 2011, he was promoted to assistant district attorney and placed in charge of the Bureau of Administration where he oversaw all logistical operations of the office. The following year, he was unanimously appointed to the position of district attorney by the Tulare County Board of Supervisors.

"I'm very proud of the fact that we had a seamless and smooth and efficient transition, and I really give credit to (previous District Attorney) Phil Cline and his vision, and to the county board of supervisors for making the appointment in the process and manner in which they did. It really allowed the office, including myself, to focus on how are we going to go about entering 2013 under new management, under a new vision, and we've been very very successful, I think, in doing that. And the reason I think it's been successful is because we had a common and unified plan and vision and that was to better serve the victims of crime in Tulare County."

Ward says he didn't start out with a specific platform or a goal as district attorney, such as aggressively processing gang cases or murder cases. "The reality is that that's our core function," he explained. "That's how we should start the day. My goal for 2013 and 2014 and beyond was how can we do it better. How can I extract from the great success and legacy that Mr. Cline had as D.A. for 20 years? How can we extract the positives from that and apply it across the entire office, and become more efficient and better at what we do?"

As district attorney, Ward's first structural change was "to reinforce our rural crime program. To me, that was the single most important decision that I could make right out of the gate." He built on his relationship with Tulare County Sheriff Bill Wittman to work together on the program.

"In April of 2013, I implemented our Crimes Against Children Team," he said, adding that he built on the successful program that his predecessor had put into place. "For years under his leadership, we always had two attorneys and they did nothing but sexual assault cases with child victims and the office was incredibly successful in doing so. It was successful because we have a system put into place that was geared to serve those very vulnerable victims. We had our child abuse response team interview room, which is an off-site location. It looks like a living room. It doesn't look like a police station."

Ward looked at that program and realized that the minority of crimes against children were sexual assault cases. "The majority were other classifications: child abuse, drug endangerment and, when I took over, we had eight pending child homicide cases," he said, adding that he expanded the existing program to cover the range of crimes against children.

"I saw first-hand how successful that model was to have a vertical prosecution element (the same attorney handles the case from the filing stage all the way to completion). By restructuring the office – not by adding positions – we had a team to do nothing but any type of crime against children. For the first time in the history of the office and the county, we have one attorney and she does nothing but child homicide cases. We still have two attorneys that do child sexual assault cases, and we have two attorneys that do the myriad of the other offenses, whether they be physical abuse, drug endangerment, neglect, kidnaping, you name it."

Ward also changed the Tulare County District Attorney's Office logo right after taking his oath of office. "The core symbol in our logo is now the torch," he said. "That goes back to my University of Tennessee days. We're going to use that torch as a symbolic metaphor to guide victims through the whole process."

To deal with ag crime, District Attorney Phil Cline developed an OAN (owner applied number) program, something that Ward is working to expand. "Quite often in the law enforcement community, they'll come across an abandoned green John Deere tractor or a fuel tank or a generator," said Ward. "Well, whose is it? Unfortunately, not all the victims maintained up-to-date serial numbers or tracked equipment by serial numbers. Without a victim, there can't be a crime. The idea was putting an owner applied number on the equipment, and for years we have maintained the database of numbers across the state."

Even so, a lot of local ranchers and farmers didn't know the program existed, according to Ward. "I put a full time investigator on it and that's all he does," he said. "We relieved that burden from local law enforcement and the sheriff's department to kind of do what I would say is somewhat of an administrative duty, to make sure that the men and women in uniform can respond to those 911 calls."

More than 2,000 pieces of equipment, and 150 new ranchers and farmers have been added to the program in the past year, he said, adding that his office also fights ag crime with bait equipment sting operations, conducted with the sheriff's department.

"We have an inventory of equipment – real generators, real types of equipment – and they have GPS devices implanted in them," he said, adding that with such equipment as night vision cameras and motion sensors, "Our investigators can be nearby and see a picture of it on their phone."

Despite the changing opinions and conflicting state and federal laws, marijuana prosecution has "always been a focus" of the D.A.'s office. "We have had and will continue to have a county marijuana task force" in conjunction with the Tulare County Sheriff's Department, Ward said. "What we bring to the table is a dedicated prosecutor who had to spend a little extra time getting training from around the state about the nuances of the medical marijuana guidelines. We have a very active and robust caseload for marijuana grows."

If he is elected for a full term as Tulare County District Attorney, Ward will focus on developing and improving current programs and procedures.

"Our focus for 2014 will be how do we better serve, from the customer service perspective, the victims of crime, the families of crime," he said. "California is on the forefront of victims' rights. We're going to be focusing on that.

"My focus has been and will continue to be to help the most vulnerable victims in our county, and I don't say at the expense of not prosecuting other cases," he said. "In a way, I classify our agricultural community as a vulnerable victim because of the nuances of the myriad of crime types that out there, but really it's our children, our victims of domestic violence and our elders that we see getting targeted more and more and more with fraudulent scams."

No Charges to Be Filed for Deputy Sheriff's Association Credit Card Use

After a comprehensive investigation and review of allegations relating to potential financial abuse within the Tulare County Deputy Sheriff's Association (DSA), the office of the Tulare County District Attorney has determined that there is no evidence to support criminal charges.

"We conducted a lengthy and thorough investigation with a number of criminal investigators and then I had my most senior staff review the results of the information," said Tulare County District Attorney Tim Ward. "The determination was made that a lot of what was mentioned in the media and in interviews that came up was just rank speculation. We spent a lot of time tracking down and disproving rumor and speculation."

On August 6, 2013, the district attorney's office opened an investigation into allegations of potential financial crimes relating to the DSA, following allegations reported by the association's new leadership.

The matter became a political issue when, at a November 12th media event to announce his candidacy for Tulare County Sheriff, former undersheriff Dave Whaley stood in front of the Tulare County Courthouse and focused most of the event to allege financial impropriety "to the point of possible embezzlement" in the DSA.

"The issue is the old DSA board that was in office used the credit cards of the DSA to make personal purchases," he said at the time. "I've been told they used the cards to buy tires for personal vehicles, and to buy boots and clothes for a wife, and orthodontic care for their kids. I was told they spent almost $50,000 for gas in a two-year period. The only vehicle the association owns is a little tractor on the pistol range."

Whaley also expressed concerns about the lack of a response by the Tulare County Sheriff's Department. However, Sheriffs Bill Wittman and, later, Mike Boudreaux were advised by Tulare County Counsel Kathleen Bales-Lange that, "since the county is a public employer, the actions you can legally take with regards to the activities of the union are limited," and that any actions by the department would "risk exposing yourself and the county to even greater liability."

The DSA is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. It is not an entity of the County of Tulare or the Tulare County Sheriff's Department.

"At the time of the use of the credit cards, a policy and procedure was apparently in place that allowed for personal use of the credit cards as long as the money was paid back," explained Ward. "Therefore, when we evaluated it, staff made a decision based on the legal analysis – and I stand behind their decision – that the elements of a crime could not be met at the time of the purchases when they had, in essence, quasi-permission to actually make those charges. And as the information that we released showed, some of that money was being paid back, and was already being paid back well before the allegations came forward."

He added that a lot of the items purchased were used as raffle prizes and for golf tournaments, "but there were personal uses of credit cards. There really wasn't sufficient bookkeeping to determine what was personal and what was not."

The investigation was undertaken by the D.A.'s Bureau of Investigations, at the request of the Visalia Police Department (VPD). The DSA had previously requested an investigation by VPD. After review, VPD made a determination that no criminal action had occurred. After returning the finding, VPD was asked by the reporting party, the leadership of the DSA, to further review the investigation. At that time, VPD requested that the district attorney take on the further review and investigation of the allegations.

After a thorough investigation and review of all the information and evidence, the district attorney's office was able to make the following findings:

1. There is no evidence that would support the filing of criminal charges relating to the subject matter of this investigation.

2. The allegations that were made relating to financial abuse are not supported by witness statements, documentary evidence and financial records.

This determination is based on a review of all of the witness statements, the financial records of the DSA and the other documentary evidence obtained during this investigation. During the course of this investigation the district attorney's office interviewed over 20 witnesses, executed search warrants for financial records and reviewed hundreds of pages of documentation. The DSA and its membership cooperated fully in the investigation.

"The Office of the District Attorney was not asked to, and did not, investigate and review issues of civil liability, accounting and procedural errors of DSA officials or employees, or issues relating to administrative discipline within the DSA or the Tulare County Sheriff's Office," read a statement issued by the district attorney's office. "Our office did not investigate or review whether appropriate policies of the DSA were adhered to, nor whether best business practices were followed. Such an evaluation is not within the purview of the Office of the District Attorney."

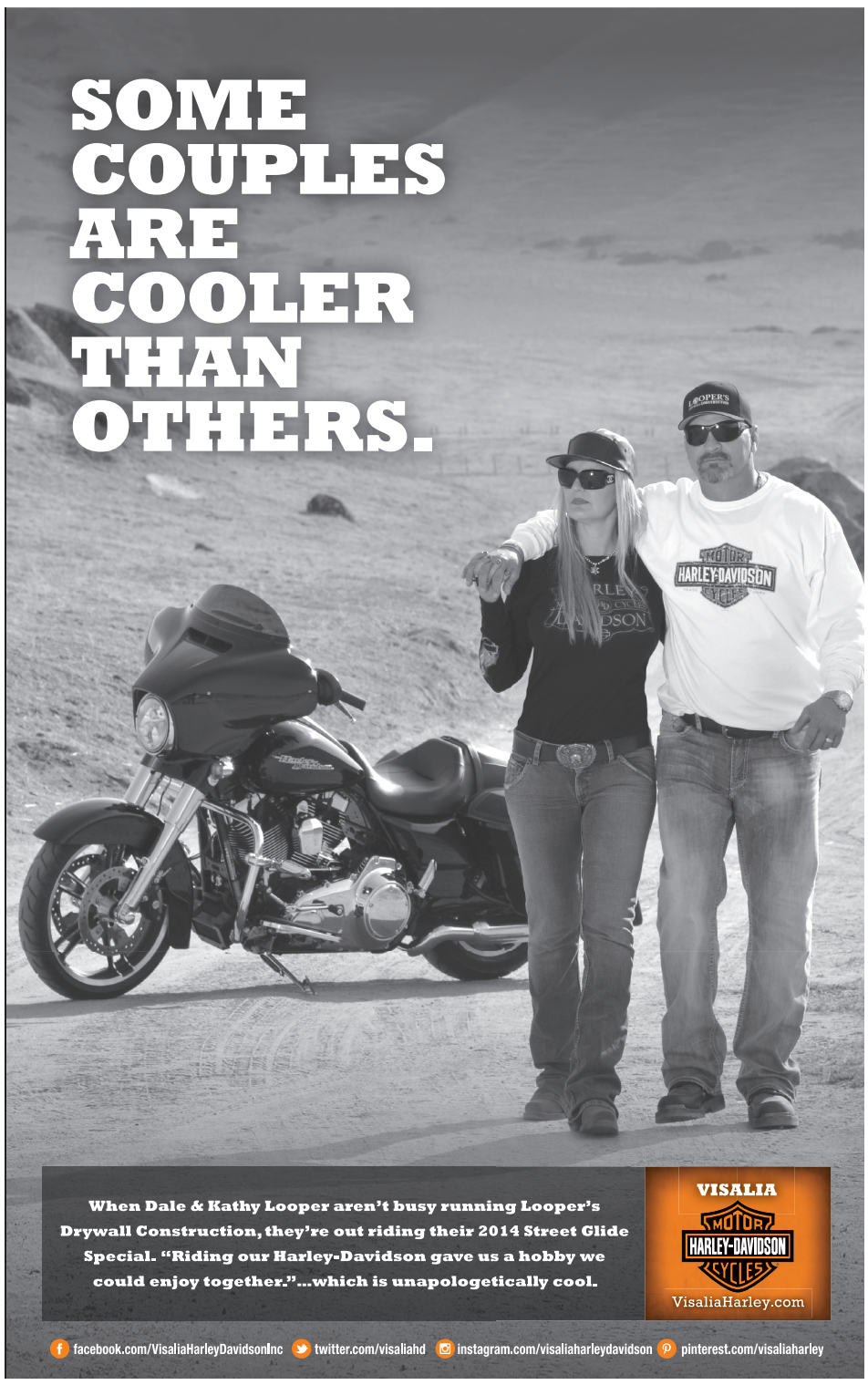
"We're really confident that they completed a very thorough investigation," said Boudreaux. "In fact, I know they did a very thorough investigation."

"He's the district attorney," said Whaley. "He decided not to prosecute. That's his decision.

"I've said all along that the main concern throughout was for a thorough, complete and unbiased investigation," he added. "I wanted to do this a year and a half ago when this first came up. Now that the D.A.'s decided not to prosecute, I look forward to healing and moving forward with the people's business."

Whaley noted, however, that, "even the D.A.'s report shows $23,000 in questionable expenses that hasn't been paid back." He also expressed concerns about the actions of association officers. "It might not be illegal for members of the sheriff's command staff to spend money that doesn't belong to them on personal items, but it's unethical."

Despite the attention his campaign focused on this matter, Whaley said, "It doesn't affect my candidacy. I was never a one-issue candidate. I have plans for the sheriff's department. I want to use my experience to run the department."



State Senator Jean Fuller Speaks at Tulare County Library

CATHERINE DOE

Tulare County Library's "Getting to Know…" series started Thursday, January 23rd with Republican State Senator Jean Fuller. Unknown to many locals, Fuller's 18th District represents Visalia and most of Tulare County in the California Senate. For those of you wondering why you've never heard of Sen. Fuller but could pick Assemblywoman Connie Conway out of a crowd, the answer is simple: Assemblywoman Conway is a local girl from Tulare, while Sen. Jean Fuller was raised on a small family farm in Shafter, just outside of Bakersfield. While she does represent Visalia, she also represents the much larger Inyo, Kern and San Bernardino Counties.

When Fuller was a young girl, the well went dry on their Shafter farm, and the family had to sell her pony and move to Bakersfield. Her first experience with drought never left her and Fuller is now the point person for water issues for the Republican Party in the State Senate.

Because of redistricting, she will be running in District 16 instead of 18, which will be close to the same boundaries as her current district. There will be a slight change in Tulare County with her losing a small part of Porterville, Tulare and Visalia in very unpopulated areas. The 18th District is the largest in California – larger than the state of New York. Alas, with all that territory she has only been given one office in Bakersfield, whereas newbie Sen. Andy Vidak has three. To be fair, his district already had two offices. He got an additional one in Hanford, but Fuller and her field representative, Stephanie Amaral, still had the look on their faces that it just wasn't fair. Being the minority party plays a hand into how many offices each representative gets. Republicans are not just the minority, but a super minority, because their numbers are so low that all of Governor Jerry Brown's bills are veto-proof.

Most of the evening revolved around water issues, and most everyone managed to keep their cool. Fuller said with a smile that the least favorite thing for a politician to do is to come talk about water issues in front of a diverse group of people, especially during a drought. One point of contention arose about the fact that the farmers are paying for 100% of the water but sometimes only get a 5% allotment. This year it may be 0%. A gentleman in the audience argued that it was disingenuous for the farmers to say they are only getting 5% of their water. The Westside farmers are junior water right holders and they were never guaranteed 100% of the water contracted for. Fuller brought the discussion back to the irony of building a huge water conveyance and storage system paid for by the farmers if they sometimes get no water.

Republican State Senator Jean Fuller speaks with a constituent.

The water shortage isn't just because of the drought, Fuller explained. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) regulates the federal pumps, and the state pumps can't violate the federal guidelines. So neither the Central Valley Water Project (federal) nor the State Water Project (state) can pump at full capacity because it kills the Delta Smelt and other fish.

"It's too simplistic to say that it is fish versus people," said Fuller. "It's just that the ESA needs to be updated based on science and not politics. This could be a very long drought. After we decide how to get through year one then what do we do for year two, then year three? What if this is a 500 year drought?"

The good news is that the governor declared a state of emergency and now President Obama can't ignore the drought anymore. "If you believe in climate change then you have got to move forward with dealing with the drought and solving water problems," said Fuller.

Fuller was the first in her family to graduate from college. She attended Bakersfield College, California State University Fresno and California State University Los Angeles, then continued her formal education at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she received her Ph.D. For seven years, Fuller was the superintendant of the 30,000-student Bakersfield School District. During this time, Congressman Bill Thomas of the 21st District encouraged Fuller to run for office, but she bemoaned that politics was all about water. About this she was correct; nevertheless, she went on to win a seat in the assembly in 2006.

Fuller's background in education made her a natural fit to be the vice-chair of the rules committee. There are two Republicans and three Democrats on this very prestigious committee wherein Governor Brown's appointees must be approved. As vice-chair, Fuller runs the senate every fourth meeting and is the first Republican to run it in 15 years. She is the first woman ever to run the senate.

Fuller is known for her very conservative vote, but also for working across the aisle. She co-authors many bills, and because the Democrats have double the votes, she has to get half of them to support her legislation to get anything passed.

This should sound familiar to anyone paying attention to the California legislature. Her political twin, Assemblywoman Connie Conway, has announced that she will be running for Fuller's seat in 2018 when Fuller terms out.

"I think that's fantastic," said Sen. Fuller.

The "Getting to Know…" program at the Tulare County Library is designed to give the people of Visalia and surrounding areas an opportunity to get to know the movers and shakers in the valley and discuss the issues that most affect them. Mayor Steve Nelsen will be the next speaker in their series February 27th at 6:30pm in the library's Blue Room.

NEXT DEADLINE:
13 February, 2014

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County

Continued from p. 1

County Counsel to hammer illegal marijuana grows. Our hat goes off to them on their tireless effort. Their goal for this year is not hard to figure out. They have applied for and received grant funding to build a new jail in Porterville and a jail with re-entry training classrooms at Sequoia Field. This represents $110,000,000 in construction projects that will add almost five hundred beds of capacity and allow our Sheriff to improve operations in the south county.

Our Fire Department replaced its entire inventory of breathing apparatus improving the safety of our fire fighters. They continue to work with the Sheriff to collocate dispatch services. This will allow the county to realize cost savings with both dispatch centers in one location.

Our Resource Management Agency processed $79,000,000 in solar projects last year. They completed several major road projects and this year are working on several bridge projects. We may not see those bridge projects under construction this year, but much of the preliminary work will be completed. There are several key employees who worked on the road projects, too many to list.

The Health and Human Service Agency partnered with our local hospitals and health care providers last year to implement the Low Income Health Program, (LIHP). Thousands of Tulare County citizens have benefited because of their hard work. They moved into a newly remodeled building on Tulare Ave. here in Visalia serving our mental health and drug and alcohol programs. This board cares about our employees and the conditions they work in. As we approach this year this same team is working around the clock to enroll all eligible residents into the Affordable Care Act program.

County Counsel hosted another successful training session for the many special districts throughout Tulare County. We have now had Government 101 through 105. This year is all about succession planning.

The Human Resource Department sponsored a very successful Employment Empowerment Symposium last year providing valuable training for hundreds of county employees and is now working on the Wellness Program. Healthy employees are happy employees.

Our Probation Department has a new leader and was handed a huge responsibility with the passing of AB109. Chief Meyer has lead our local team of law enforcement through a very tough two years managing new funding and a lot of pressure to provide new programming. Over the horizon though is her vision and others for much needed vocational training for our youth in her facility. The plans for a new training building are in the works right now. She cares about those she has been entrusted with. Even though some are there for only a short time and some are very young, she has a vision and plans for them and their future.

I would like to take a few moments and talk about our Board Representatives. Julietta Martinez has been working on the board's good works fund since she started with us and does a wonderful job. Having a bilingual person on board has helped on many occasions and she has a wonderful personality that comes across the phone. She prepares the majority of the proclamations and certificates we present and she is always doing her best to make sure they are complete and accurate.

Allison Pierce has taken the Tulare County Gang Prevention Task Force to new levels. When I requested information from the departments for this presentation, I received one or two pages of information. Allison handed over twenty pages. Not only is she surpassing our expectations with the many Step Up programs she oversees, she has the attitude to go along with it. She brings an excellent attitude and a wonderful spirit with her each day to work that is contagious.

The Step Up program includes several services we provide for the youth in Tulare County. Last year the LOOP bus provided rides for over 17,500 youth to after school programs. This represents an increase of over 50% from the previous year. The Summer Night Lights program more than doubled with over 12,000 attending events. We have now reached over 100,000 Tulare County citizens with Step Up programming since we began in 2007. Looking forward to this year and beyond there are a few new areas that have requested programming in their communities such as Strathmore. CSET is now working with 30 Visalia Unified students on the #LEAD program. This is a program training high school aged students to be mentors and leaders in their schools. The city of Porterville is leading the way with their commitment to the young people by taking the Step Up message to their neighborhoods. We will work with our partners in the Health and Human Services Department to direct funding in a more focused way to troubled teens and families.

The people who work in this office are all wonderful to work with. I am constantly amazed at the amount of work that gets done each day. Our CAO Jean Rousseau has been a great addition to the county family. He has listened to and followed the direction of this board and is leading the charge as we rebuild our way out of the recession. His knowledge of government financing and his conservative nature have been a tremendous help to the citizens of Tulare County. He has assisted in the oversight of the retirement fund which has seen great growth during the past few years.

This is just a small sampling of the many success stories shared by our department heads. There is much more to tell.

Now following is a list of what I would hope to continue and build on past successes this board has participated in the previous year.

With the support of this board, we will continue to hold night time meetings in each district again this year. It proved to be very successful allowing those who work during the day to have access to their supervisors in their local communities. We will also continue to meet with the Indian Tribal Council this year. During our meeting with them last year we were able to open up communication lines that for years did not exist.

At the end of last year, this board held a retreat in Three Rivers. We were able to work on relationships that had deteriorated over the last few years and worked together to realize a common vision and discuss goals for the future. This year, we will include the department heads in a retreat setting to improve our relationship with them and work on visioning and goals for the future. Staff has been directed to schedule a time and place for this important meeting that will kick start us off into the New Year.

Part of that discussion will include the needs of each department. We will reacquire two county buildings in the middle of next year when the Office of Education moves into their new facility. I am sure there are already plans being made for those offices and buildings by each and every department head. This is a great opportunity for us as a board to connect with each department and consider their needs for future office space and will want to make sure it will serve the needs of this county well for many years.

We all know that we are experiencing the worst water conditions in recorded history. Our citrus industry has suffered a one two blow with the freeze and now a pest that is spreading county wide. We have great concerns for our farming, cattle and all of the agriculture industry that is the backbone of Tulare County. I talked with Neil Pilegard who oversees the upkeep of our parks and grounds belonging to Tulare County. Neil is already working on water saving measures. This county will lead the way when it comes to water conservation. Starting immediately lawns and planters will receive minimal watering and trees will also be maintained so that we will not lose them. We ask the public to bear with us as we let the lawns go brown and reduce the plantings in our flower beds. Neil assures me that most of our grass is common Bermuda and will come back next year when we turn the water on again. We will do our part to free up as much water for our farmers as possible and ask others to do the same.

We as a board have recognized that there is a great need to invest more in our employees and provide training that will help them become the leaders we know they can be. While I was a contractor with a sheet metal shop, I never would have cons\ridered putting an untrained person on a machine that cut and bent steel. This would have been dangerous and had a straight line to the emergency room. We are committed to work with our HR department and provide resources to give our employees the best training we can.

There have been times in our country's history when we have stood shoulder to shoulder to fight with and for each other when we were attacked from the outside. When the Nazi's threatened the world our fathers and grandfathers went to war, side by side regardless of color, status or religion. Our mothers and grandmothers stayed home and took up the slack. Together with other countries we stood together and fought and won. The State of California is under attack. This enemy knows no color, status or religion. Our common enemy is the drought. This Sunday, the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is asking the members of the church state wide, of which I am one, to fast and pray for rain. So I extend to challenge to all within the sound of my voice to join with us and show our faith and ask God to send rain. We have the opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder again regardless of color, status or religion with a common goal to petition God to help our land.

I hope the "take away" from this meeting today is that the County of Tulare is in good financial shape. We have a healthy retirement fund. We care about our employees and their working conditions. We are a people of faith. We have good solid plans for the future and are dedicated to the citizens of this great county.

Building Permits Surge in Tulare County

Tulare County officials say the number of building permits for both single-family homes and commercial buildings increased sharply in 2013. County records show 3,363 building permits were issued in 2013 – up sharply from the 3,023 issued in 2012.

"The value of county building permits issued in 2013 increased by $40 million over the value of permits issued during 2012," said Phil Cox, chairman of the Tulare County Board of Supervisors. "This is one sign the economy is improving in the area."

Officials say the value of all building permits issued in 2013 increased approximately 32% - to an estimated overall valuation of $166.3 million. Permits issued for houses increased by 23% while commercial building permits increased by 20%.

What's changed? Two years ago, the Board of Supervisors established an in-house economic development program to foster value growth. Challenged to make the county easier to do business with, planning administrators developed a team-based approach toward business development. For example, if someone wanted to fast-track construction of a medical clinic, or expand a large ag processing facility on an aggressive timeline, the county developed a "new" team-based process to accommodate that developer's needs.

"We have streamlined the process to improve service to our customers," said Mike Spata, associate director of the Tulare County Resource Management Agency.

The planning team works with the business owner or project applicant to determine several important details, such as project timeline and how much the process should cost.

"Then we can have the real conversation – how fast the business owner wants to move forward," Spata said.

Officials say the increase in business activity and total number of projects permitted during the last two years indicates that in addition to signs the overall economy is finally improving, the county's new economic development approach appears to be working nicely. In 2013 alone: Setton Farms pulled more than $2 million worth of permits for plant expansions; Paramount Citrus expanded greenhouse facilities with $2 million in permits; Family Health Care Network's new rural medical clinic in Terra Bella had a $750,000 permit value; and Ventura Coastal installed $1.6 million in new silos to store citrus juice in Tipton.

Terra Bella

Continued from p. 1

contribute to the local community in a positive and a constructive manner." "They really want to give back to the community," said Tulare County Sheriff Mike Boudreaux. "The park that's going in will provide a place they've never had, except for the schoolyard."

Funding for the park, estimated at $200,000 for the land, which was purchased from Union Pacific Railroad in 2012, and $250,000 to develop the park, is coming from Setton Pistachio, as well as from several key partners such as general contractors and other major vendors. Setton has also received financial support from dozens of local companies, suppliers and friends.

"We feel that the optimal approach is to develop and operate an ADA-compliant playground/park for children and families," explained Cohen, who outlined the benefits of the project. "This will enhance the community in numerous ways, the first and most obvious being that it will provide a safe place for children to play, getting them off of the heavily trafficked streets. Second, by incorporating picnic benches, barbecues, green space, shade structures and landscaping, the park will provide an area for families and the community to come together.

"Third, with committed support from the Terra Bella Irrigation District, the park will include a public water access spot," he continued. "This will provide residents with convenient access to healthy, municipally-treated water for drinking and cooking. Residents will be able to fill their own large water bottles and jugs from their car trunks. Currently, the only treated water spigot is in the middle of a nearby dirt field with no vehicular access.

"Fourth, with committed support from the Sheriff's Department of Tulare County, the park will be become a regular safety and security stop on the local patrol route. The intention is that there will be regular and periodic stops multiple times per day by local patrols where they will sit in their cars and prepare law-enforcement related paper-work, creating a regular extended presence at the park. This will serve to increase awareness of law enforcement presence in the community, establishing a safety-zone, which should ultimately reduce crime and gang-related activity in the community.

"Fifth, a section of the park will be designed and built by the community. The community will have a direct and meaningful involvement in the selecting the design and participating in the construction of this section of the park. We believe this will foster community acceptance and interest in the project.

"Sixth, in February 2011, Setton Pistachio and the community suffered a horrible industrial accident whereby one of our employees was tragically killed in the course of work," Cohen said. "To commemorate and acknowledge this unfortunate tragedy, Setton is planning to provide a memorial space in the park to remember our beloved employee. We believe this serves as an important and essential element of the park for the local community and the family and friends affected by this tragedy."

Setton has been working with Tulare County and its Economic Development Agency, as well as the Resource Management Agency, to prepare all necessary paperwork and permits. The county is supporting the park as a meaningful way to partner with business in an effort to provide community services. Much of the infrastructure work, such as ground preparation, lighting installation, parking lot access and plumbing is being provided for free or at discounted rates by many long-standing Setton vendors and partners. The land, equipment, assets and liability will be contained within a designated public benefit corporation formed specifically for this purpose and will have a 501c(3) status.

The park is also benefitting from the county's new approach in working with those developing new projects.

"We have increased the speed with which the permits are processed," said Mike Spata, associate director of the Tulare County Resource Management Agency. "Secondly, we have used an interdisciplinary project management approach which enables the speed of the project to increase. Thirdly – and this is important – we concurrently process the permits.

"We try to do this with almost all of our projects right now," he said, explaining that by simultaneously processing permits, projects can now be completed significantly faster than they were two years ago. He listed the Family HealthCare Network health clinic in Terra Bella, the Woodville Medical Clinic and most of the recent solar projects in the county among those benefiting from the county's new permit policy.

The Tulare County Sheriff's Department has been involved in the project, giving advice about security cameras and rolling gates, as well as on what hours the park should be open and closed.

"We will provide whatever information they need that will help in security," added Boudreaux. "And we promised to keep providing security. We will provide regular and routine patrol checks. We will make sure our officers are driving through the area."

"It's great for the community," said Tulare County Supervisor Mike Ennis, whose district includes Terra Bella.

At the future site of the park in Terra Bella are (l-r): Tulare County Economic Development Manager Michael Washam, Setton Pistachio General Manager Lee Cohen and Tulare County Administrative Officer Jean Rousseau.

"They've needed something like this for a long time, especially for the small kids.

"There was a big turnout when we had a meeting," he said about the meeting where members of the community offered opinions and suggestions to Setton Pistachio about how the new park should look and what features it should have. "Getting them involved was very important. They feel the park is theirs now.

"The community is really coming together," said Ennis, noting the recent openings of the Family Dollar store and the Family HealthCare Network health clinic. "It's like a lot of things are coming together out there."

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For information on the OAN program, contact the Office of the District Attorney, 636-5410. To report an ag crime, contact your local law enforcement agency.

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Countdown Begins for World Ag Expo

World Ag Expo will celebrate its 47th year on February 11-13 in Tulare. The largest annual agricultural exposition of its kind, World Ag Expo touts more than 1,500 exhibitors who display cutting-edge agricultural technology and equipment on 2.6 million square feet of show grounds. An estimated average of 100,000 individuals from 70 countries attend the Expo each year to learn about the latest advances in agriculture.

More than 40 seminars will be offered in beef, dairy, hay and forage, international trade, irrigation and general agriculture categories. Seminars presented by professionals in the industry provide attendees with valuable information to improve their operations.

New for 2014 is the World Ag Expo Arena in the southwest area of the show grounds. The Arena, which is facilitated by Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers, will be home to daily Exhibitor Showcases. Attendees will enjoy watching the show from the comfort of their seats as exhibitors drive their equipment past the bleachers.

World Ag Expo attendees can get the latest news, information and updates about the show by downloading the new for 2014 mobile app. The free app provides mobile access to the schedule of events, an exhibitor directory, map of the show grounds and other visitor resources. The app is available for download by visiting the iTunes store or Android Marketplace, search for "World Ag Expo 2014."

Hours are 9am to 5pm February 11 and 12, and 9am to 4pm on February 13. General admission at the gate is $15. Advance tickets are available at www.WorldAgExpo.org and using the coupon code "WAE2014" saves $5 on each ticket. For a full schedule of events and more information about the show visit www.WorldAgExpo.org.

Ruiz 4 Kids Now Accepting Applications

Ruiz 4 Kids is now accepting applications for scholarships from high school seniors in the areas where Ruiz Foods has a presence. Award amounts range from $1,000-$2500 and, as in the past, ethnicity and/or citizenship is not a consideration. The deadline for submitting all applications is March 7.

Applicants are encouraged to visit www.ruiz4kids.org/programs-scholarships.aspx for more information or to complete their application.

All scholarship dollars are raised via the Louis F. Ruiz Golf Invitational. In 2013, Ruiz 4 Kids awarded $262,500 in scholarships to 253 high school seniors and college students. Since 1985, Ruiz 4 Kids has awarded over $2 million in scholarships.

Ruiz 4 Kids, a non-profit organization formed in conjunction with Ruiz Foods, was founded in 1990 when Ruiz Team members approached Fred Ruiz asking him to help them explore ways to assist families with children in need. Since then, Ruiz 4 Kids has organized two annual fundraising events – a golf invitational to raise monies for scholarships and a fiesta event to raise monies for area non-profits who are in need to grow their children-focused programs.

Ruiz Foods employs over 2,300 team members in three facilities located in the U.S.

Tulare County Reappoints Marilyn Kinoshita as Ag Commissioner

STAFF REPORTS

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors announced that Marilyn Kinoshita has been reappointed to an additional four-year term as Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer. This will be Kinoshita's second four-year term. Kinoshita was first appointed to the Ag Commissioner position in December 2009.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Phil Cox said Kinoshita's proven track record as ag commissioner was the deciding factor in the reappointment. In her first four years, Kinoshita has led the department in improving technology to enhance operations, bolstered community outreach and education, and focused on specialized training for staff.

Marilyn Kinoshita

"The farming community is pleased with the job Marilyn is doing, as is the Board of Supervisors," Chairman Cox said. "We look forward to Marilyn's leadership for another four years."

Kinoshita said she is pleased to serve as ag commissioner for an additional term.

"We have a few exciting projects in the works which will help streamline daily activities for our staff," she said. "Growers can also rely on up-to-date information from our website. I plan to continue volunteering to speak to any local group who wants to learn more about how crops are grown in Tulare County and my department's roll in the process of sending products worldwide."

Kinoshita joined the Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's department as an inspector in 1993, and has since worked in most of the divisions within the department. She began her Tulare County career working in pesticide use enforcement, and then served as a standards and quarantine inspector before becoming the department's Dinuba District inspector in 1999.

Kinoshita was promoted to deputy agricultural commissioner/sealer of weights and measures in February 2004, a position responsible for the direct supervision of 29 ag inspectors and 16 agricultural aides. Kinoshita was promoted again in October 2009 to the position of assistant agricultural commissioner/sealer, the second highest ranked position in the department.

Prior to coming to work in Tulare County, Kinoshita worked six years for the Merced County Agricultural Commissioner's office as a pest detection trapper. She earned her B.S. in agronomy from Arkansas State University in 1985, but says she first became interested in agriculture while growing up on her family's farm in Nebraska, where they raised cattle and grew alfalfa, soybeans and wheat.

In addition to her reappointment, Kinoshita will receive a 5 percent salary increase, bringing her base salary to $118,966 annually.

Diabetic Drugs May Be Dangerous To Your Health

New guide sheds light on the dangers of diabetic drugs and why doctors prescribe them anyway. You could be at risk!

A free guide has just been released that reveals why current therapy may make your condition worse. If you are frustrated that your blood sugars don't budge and continue to rise despite your drugs this guide is a must have. To receive your free guide entitled "Diabetic Ignorance: How Drug Companies, The Food Industry, and some Drs. set you up for Failure" call today 1-559-627-2225 or go to www.visaliadiabetesreport.com Dr. Ruben Garcia, DC

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Lot 14	Tulare Business Park	3.01 Acres	$ 555,000
Lot 15	Tulare Business Park	1.43 Acres	$ 350,000
157 Acres Industrial Zoned Land			$ 8,276,400
5 acres of land for ground lease Industrial zoned			$2,500 rent
5 Acres (66 Unites Approved) Multi Family Development			$1,250,000
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Retail Space for Lease East Tulare Ave & Mooney			$1.85 rent
CBD Tulare 9,000 SF Office 157 South K FOR SALE			$425,000
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TC Program for Mass Indigent Burial Put Off for a Month

CATHERINE DOE

Because of a clerical error, and miscommunication about fees, the county decided to postpone mass burial at Potters Field until March 28th.

At the January 28th Board of Supervisor Meeting, Dawn Bliler, from Lewis and Associates, approached the podium during public comment to express concern over the mass indigent burial planed at Potter's Field in Traver on February 28th.

"I just felt very strongly that I needed to let the supervisors know that Feb 28th is just too soon to have the mass burial." Her reasons were several. To begin with, the list of names of those to be interred was incorrect. The list stated that 32 departed souls, out of the 205 to be interred, were already buried when, in fact, they were not. The Kingsburg Cemetery District has fixed the error and has passed that information on to Tulare County. Bliler felt that the relatives of those 32 people needed more time to make arrangements to pick up their loved ones.

The list is a handwritten document, located at the Kingsburg Cemetery District office of indigent burials, and dates back to 1964. The Tulare County Health and Human Services (TCHHSA) transcribed the list and posted it online as a public service. The list ranges from newborns to people in their eighties whose families were unable or unwilling to bury them.

The second issue is the $700 fee to pick up any remains at the Kingsburg Cemetery District office. There is also a $60 administration fee collected by the cemetery district. Whereas the cemetery district has to collect their administration fee, TCHHSA will waive the $700 cremation fee for those who are unable to pay it. According to Supervisor Steve Worthley, "This is not a quid pro quo. We advise the families that $700 is what it costs the county. But the county is not going to prevent family members from picking up their loved-one's remains."

Because of Bliler's concerns, the supervisors reconsidered conducting the mass burial in February. According to Jed Chernabaeff, administrative analyst for TCHHSA, "Supervisor Cox and Supervisor Worthley decided to push back the mass burial for a month based on the interests of the public." The new internment date will be March 28th, giving families until March 25th to claim their relative's remains.

"This is just a subject that is dear to my heart," said Bliler. "I have done fundraising for two families that have not been able to afford to bury their loved-ones. The first family was a high school friend whose daughter had died of cancer and the second family contacted me through the first. They just told me what kind of arrangements they wanted and I raised the money. One family needed $3,000 and the other needed $10,000."

"It's so rewarding for me to help them do what they need for their loved-ones who have passed," said Bliler.

According to Salser and Dillard Funeral Chapel, during the last mass burial, in 2006, 13 families came forward to claim their loved-ones, but only three actually showed up to retrieve the remains. One memorable case was that of a woman who was shocked to see her foster mother on the list of those to be buried in the mass grave. The departed woman had one natural son who, as next of kin, was put in charge of her body. The son told the foster daughter that he was taking care of his mother's burial, but ended up never claiming her remains. Because the foster daughter wasn't the next of kin, she wasn't notified. She was one of the three people to retrieve her family's remains from Kingsburg Cemetery District and give her foster mother a private burial.

It was suggested that the county send out letters to advise any next of kin of the mass burial, but Supervisor Worthley noted that the families have already been alerted. They are notified by the coroner, and are required to sign a consent form for the county to cremate the remains. The county does a late media push as a public service to let families know that the mass burial is happening. Additionally, a letter would have not done any good in the case of the foster daughter because the natural born son would have received it. The foster daughter only heard

Continued on p. 12 »

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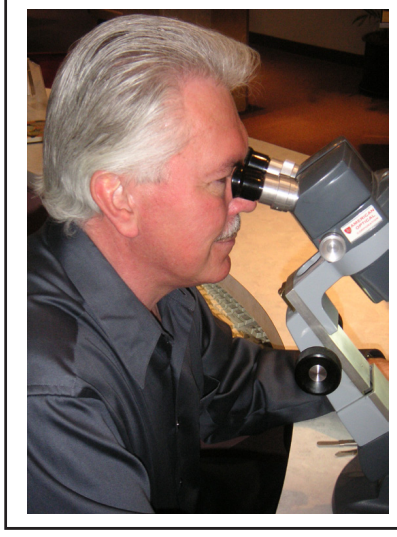
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News in Brief...

CHINA CONTRIBUTES TO LOCAL AIR POLLUTION

A new study shows that emissions from China are reaching California and adding to the state's air pollution. This, according to the study, is largely the result of Chinese manufacturing practices and coal-burning power plants.

"Pollution from China is having an effect in the U.S., and we need to recognize how that is affecting both our background ozone levels and also particulates that are reaching the West Coast," said Don Wuebbles, professor of atmospheric science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the co-author of the new study in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

According to the study, Chinese pollution contributes up to 24% of daily sulfate concentrations.

MAJOR HEAVY EQUIPMENT PARTS DISTRIBUTOR MOVES TO VISALIA

American Crane and Tractor Parts, Inc. will open its new warehouse and sales office on Hurley Avenue in Visalia this month. The Kansas City-based company is a distributor of aftermarket Caterpillar parts and new replacement parts for the construction and agriculture industries.

President Paul D. King says he is "thrilled to now have a location in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley where we can be partners with some of this country's most vital farming and agricultural communities."

The warehouse's 15,000-plus part inventory has already been put into place.

HOBBY LOBBY MAY CLOSE ALL 500+ STORES IN 41 STATES

If the Hobby Lobby in Visalia permanently closes its doors this year, it probably won't be the result of local sales numbers, but rather a response to a regulation in ObamaCare.

"A new government healthcare mandate says that our family business must provide what I believe are abortion-causing drugs as part of our health insurance," wrote David Green, founder and CEO of Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc. "Being Christians, we don't pay for drugs that might cause abortions, which means that we don't cover emergency contraception, the morning-after pill or the week-after pill. We believe doing so might end a life after the moment of conception, something that is contrary to our most important beliefs. It goes against the Biblical principles on which we have run this company since day one. If we refuse to comply, we could face $1.3 million per day in government fines."

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear oral arguments for the case of Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc. on March 25. Green is considering closing all of his stores if the ruling goes against him.

FRESNO/VISALIA RANKS LOW IN EMBRACING THE BIBLE

When it comes to U.S. cities that embrace the Bible, Tennessee still has bragging rights. The latest release ranking from American Bible Society finds Chattanooga is America's most Bible-minded city. Chattanooga takes over the number-one ranking from Knoxville, which claimed the top spot in 2012.

Meanwhile, the Fresno/Visalia area ranks 70th out of the 100 metropolitan areas listed.

The American Bible Society's study of America's Most Bible-Minded Cities found that, while the Bible Belt continues to perform strongly, East Coast cities continue to bring up the rear. While ranked number one in Bible mindedness, Chattanooga ranks 87th in population size. Just one of the top 10 Bible-minded cities ranks in the top 25 cities by population size. Charlotte, America's sixth most Bibleminded city is the 25th most populous city.

NEW FACILITY EXPANDS ONTRAC PRESENCE IN CALIFORNIA

Due to rapid growth, OnTrac, the leader in regional overnight package delivery, is expanding its operation in Visalia. The new building will consolidate the existing Fresno, Visalia, and Kettleman City operations under a single roof and will be OnTrac's largest facility in the Central Valley.

The facility includes four times as many dock doors as the previous Visalia operation, enabling OnTrac to move packages more efficiently and offer its customers faster service. From Visalia, OnTrac is able to reach every ZIP Code in California and the major metropolitan areas in Nevada overnight, with two-day shipping to Arizona, Washington, Oregon, Utah, Colorado and Idaho.

"The City of Visalia welcomes OnTrac's new 90,000-square-foot facility to our Industrial Park, the largest in the region for the overnight package delivery company," Visalia Mayor Steve Nelsen said. "The additional employees OnTrac will bring to the city are a welcome boost to the local economy."

FOUR COS STUDENTS PREPARE TO WORK WITH NASA

Four College of the Sequoias students have been selected as NASA Community College Aerospace Scholars and will work with NASA engineers and scientists next month.

David Berlin, math/science major from Mt. Whitney High, Jon Sosa, engineering major from Redwood High, Devin Bisconer, engineering major from Tulare Union High, and Nick Morley, math major from Exeter High, will spend three days this month at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena where they will work with NASA personnel on Mars rover proposals.

UTILITY BILLING CHANGES TAKE EFFECT IN FEBRUARY

Effective February 6, Visalia utility customers will begin receiving a California Water Service Inc., and a City of Visalia utility bill. Cal Water's bill will be solely for water service, and the city's utility bill will be for garbage, sewer, groundwater and storm drain services. Same services, same cost, but two bills.

There are no changes to paying the Cal Water bill, including auto debits, online bill payments, mail-in, or walk-in payment options. City Utility Services bills will now come from the city's utility vendor, Fathom. The City Utility Bill can be paid either automatically or online, but you will need to sign-up separately with automatic debit and/or bill pay. Additional information on payment options will be provided with your new bill. Cal Water won't accept payments for city utility bills and the city won't accept payments for Cal Water bills.

For more information, go to www.ci.visalia.ca.us/utilitybill.

KAWEAH DELTA WELCOMES NEW CHIEF MEDICAL AND QUALITY OFFICER

Kaweah Delta Health Care District welcomes its first chief medical and quality officer to the area. James Paskert, MD, filled the new district position last month. Dr. Paskert comes to Kaweah Delta having most recently served as Chief Medical Officer for the Mountain States Health Alliance. He has also served as the Quality Assurance Chief at Franklin Square Hospital in Rosedale, Maryland, and as Vice President of Medical Affairs at City Hospital in Martinsburg, West Virginia. He holds a doctorate of medicine from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia and is currently completing his Masters in Business Administration at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. During the clinical phase of his career, Dr. Paskert served as a plastic surgeon for many years, having completed his residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland.

"We're excited to have Dr. Paskert here with us. He will play an integral part in helping us pursue our objective of becoming one of the state's and this nation's premier providers of high-quality healthcare services," said Lindsay Mann, CEO of Kaweah Delta Medical Center.

TULARE COUNTY LIBRARY UNVEILS NEW ALTA VISTA BOOK MACHINE

The Tulare County Library unveiled its newest book machine on January 29 at the book machine site near the Alta Vista Elementary School in east Porterville at the corner of South Doyle Street and Crabtree Avenue.

The Alta Vista book machine is a book-dispensing machine that makes hundreds of books available to residents. Residents can come to the machine day or night, scan their Tulare County Library card, and select the book they would like.

The Alta Vista book machine is one of several installed in underserved areas

throughout the county. The other locations are in Cutler, Tipton and the

Visalia and Dinuba One-Stop Employment Connection centers.

SIERRA VIEW DISTRICT HOSPITAL HIRES TWO NEW VICE PRESIDENTS

After conducting a nationwide executive search led by healthcare leadership solutions firm B. E. Smith, Sierra View District Hospital in Porterville has hired Jeffery Hudson as vice president, patient care services, and Vonnie Nunes as vice president, quality and regulatory affairs. Both seasoned healthcare executives, Hudson and Nunes assumed their new duties at Sierra View District Hospital on January 20.

"We are excited to find not one, but two experienced healthcare professionals with successful track records in both clinical and operational leadership roles," said Donna Hefner, CEO of

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News in Brief

Continued from p. 11

Sierra View District Hospital. "Jeff and Vonnie bring a strong focus and dedication to providing high-quality patient care, and are committed to gaining staff and community trust at Sierra View District Hospital."

VISALIA POLICE DEPARTMENT HIRES CRIME PREVENTION COORDINATOR

The Visalia Police Department announced the hiring of Samantha Ferrero as its new Crime Prevention Coordinator. Ferrero was born and raised in the City of Visalia. She attended Golden West High School and graduated in 2007. She attended UC San Diego, where she graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor's Degree in International Studies and a minor in Legal Studies.

Prior to being recently hired as the department's crime prevention coordinator, Ferrero worked for the Department's Crime Lab. She is currently on the board of directors for ACT for Women and Girls, a local non-profit organization.

ROCK STAR TEACHER CAMP PLANNED FOR JUNE

Computer-Using Educators (CUE) Inc. is seeking energized, motivated, and innovative teachers to attend CUE's Rock Star Teacher Camp in Tulare County, June 18-20, as well as at other locations in the state in the spring and summer.

CUE's Rock Star Teacher Camps consist of hands-on, "make-it, take-it" sessions taught by the award-winning CUE Rock Star faculty, many of whom are Apple Distinguished Educators, Google Certified Teachers and Microsoft Innovative Educators. The goal of the camps is to inspire educators who want to take their instruction to the next level through the latest and greatest technological tools, theories, and practical applications. Each camp is kept to a limited number of enrollees to maintain the 1:10 faculty to participant ratio, and the camps are designed for those with intermediate to advanced technical skills.

To register for a CUE Rock Star Teacher Camp, visit www.cue.org/rockstar.

PORTERVILLE COLLEGE, U.S. BANK OFFER ONECARD

Porterville College has partnered with U.S. Bank to introduce a new campus ID called the OneCard— Porterville College's official ID Card.

The OneCard combines the student ID with a prepaid Debit MasterCard. It is designed as a smart solution to managing college expenses and it will speed up the financial aid refund process beginning this spring.

Students electing to activate a prepaid MasterCard account with their OneCard pay no enrollment or monthly fees. Funds can be added to the account from one or multiple sources, such as a parent, employer or financial aid office, at no cost. Cardholders can also withdraw funds from the account for free at any U.S. Bank or MoneyPass-branded ATM located on campus or nationwide. Online and mobile tools are available for cardholders to stay easily informed and in control of their finances.

For more information, visit www.portervillecollege.edu/onecard.

Burial

Continued from p. 10

about the imminent burial of her mother in the mass grave through the media.

"Public awareness is key," said Bliler.

Those families who lack the means to bury a family member may qualify for the county's burial program. To qualify, the deceased's entire household must earn less than the federal poverty level. Applications are available in English and Spanish from the TCHHSA, the TulareWORKs offices, all funeral homes, the Coroner's Office, and Veterans Serivces offices. Once an application has been approved, the funeral home will have the body cremated. The applicant may pick up the cremains from the County Coroner's Office. If the remains are not collected within eighteen months the coroner sends them to the Kingsburg Cemetery District. Tulare County sends about thirty cremains a year to Kingsburg Cemetery District and conducts a mass burial about every eight years in Potter's Field located in the Traver Cemetery. The first mass burial was in 1999.

Kingsburg Cemetery District Superintendent Carmen Rojas said more than 210 indigent cremains are being held at the Kingsburg Cemetery. The last day to claim the cremains is March 25. Family members or next of kin are encouraged to visit http://tchhsa.org/hhsa/index.cfm/benefits/burial-program/potters-field-burial-records/ to view a list of indigent cremains being held by the Kingsburg Cemetery. If a person is identified, family members or next of kin should contact Rojas at 897-2426. The Kingsburg Cemetery is located on 12782 E. Clarkson Ave.

"I just hope the families get a chance to claim their loved-ones before the mass burial. The issue is very dear to my heart," said Bliler.

For those who do not get claimed, TCHHSA and the Kingsburg Cemetery District has made arrangements for a very nice ceremony and everyone is invited to attend.

"Every person is entitled to a respectful burial," said Worthley.

The ceremony will start with a welcome by Supervisor Steve Worthley and a few words by Dallas Pattee from the Tulare County Historical Society. This will be followed by prayers of various denominations and then each person's name will be read out loud.

The internment ceremony will be conducted at 10am on Friday, March 28 at Potter's Field which is at the northeast corner of Ave. 376 and Rd. 36, about a mile north of Traver.

Political Fix

Continued from p. 3

women in the 120-member Legislature has fallen from a peak of 37 in 2006 to 32 this year." Women could lose an additional three to five seats this cycle.

Even with the dropping numbers of women in the legislature, Tulare County happens to be represented by Sen. Jean Fuller and Assemblywoman Connie Conway, two of the more able representatives our county has ever seen.

Assemblywoman Conway serves on several organizations that recruit and train women candidates, "I always say the Legislature should be a microcosm of California." But it's far below the 50.2 percent of the state's population who are women. Ms. Conway is one of eight women leaving the Legislature this year because of term limits or retirement. A ninth may leave if she is elected to congress.

Currently, 20 of the 80 Assembly members are women, seven being Republican and 13 being Democrats. Twelve of the 39 members in the Senate are women.

AND LASTLY, FOR THE RIDICULOUS

State Senator Roderick Wright, D-Inglewood, introduced SB 929 which would allow those convicted of non-violent felonies to ask a judge to reduce the offenses to misdemeanors under certain circumstances. The problem? A jury just convicted Sen. Wright of eight felony charges of perjury and voter fraud, i.e. non-violent felonies. Sen. Wright is the first member of the Legislature to be convicted of a felony since the 1990's and he faces eight years in prison. It was decided that his bill would not advance through committee. "Wrong senator, Wrong time," said a spokesperson for Sen ProTem Derrell Steinberg.

State Sen. Ron Calderon, D-Montebello, is under investigation for allegedly taking bribes in exchange for legislative action. His next bill is to introduce legislation to reduce oversight on special interest campaign contributions. (Not really)

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AmeriCorps Partners with Self-Help Enterprises

A team of 12 young adults from the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), will assist Self-Help Enterprises through March 22 to construct affordable housing for low-income families in Goshen.

The mission of Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) is to assist low-income residents of the San Joaquin Valley in improving their living conditions. SHE's New Homes program works to fulfill this mission by designing modest, energy-efficient homes and guiding the future homeowners through the process of securing a mortgage loan and building their home through "sweat equity." Since its founding in 1965, SHE has helped over 6,000 families achieve their dream of owning a home.

"We are incredibly grateful for the service of these dedicated AmeriCorps members," said Peter Carey, CEO of Self-Help Enterprises. "Their commitment to help the community and low-income families in need of affordable housing is an inspiration."

The NCCC team will work alongside SHE participant homebuilders as well as a SHE onsite construction superintendent. The team will be participating in construction tasks including pouring foundations for the homes, framing, blocking, electrical work, trim carpentry and siding.

"I'm proud and pleased to know that these struggling families will have a roof over their heads because of the work my team has done with Self-Help Enterprises," said Travis Culbreth, an AmeriCorps NCCC member.

Self-Help Enterprises is a nationally recognized housing and community development organization serving the San Joaquin Valley since 1965. The largest developer of mutual self-help housing in the nation, SHE has helped over 6,000 low income families to build their own homes. In addition, the organization has rehabilitated over 6,000 homes and developed over 1,300 units of rental housing. SHE also provides technical assistance to small communities working to meet sewer, water and other community housing needs.

The AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) and its FEMA Corps units engage 2,800 young Americans in a full-time, 10-month commitment to service each year. The program is currently celebrating its 20th anniversary. AmeriCorps NCCC members address critical needs related to natural and other disasters, infrastructure improvement, environmental stewardship and conservation, and urban and rural development.

For more information about Self-Help Enterprises, visit SelfHelpEnterprises.org. For information about the National Civilian Community Corps, visit NationalService.gov.

Drought

Continued from p. 1

"The public has done a great job of conserving water over the last ten years. I think we need to educate the public first and we will surprised by their response. I have faith in the citizens of Visalia if we help them understand the problem."

Gubler added, "I think the public would participate voluntarily."

According to Loeb, the council advised the city staff to start working now with the schools and Caltrans on water conservation, neither of which follows Visalia's water ordinances. The next priority is to work on specific modifications to the stage 4 mandatory compliance. "We are going to look at the middle because it is so large of a jump from stage 3 to stage 4," Loeb said. Visalia has been in stage 3 for the last 20 years because of the ground water situation.

Stage 4 of the ordinance was written many years ago and is quite severe and not up-to-date so the staff did not recommend implementing it at this time. Under stage 4, all elements of stage 3 remain in effect except for the following:

1. All outdoor irrigation of vegetation shall be allowed only between the hours of 8pm and midnight on designated days [currently irrigation is allowed between 8pm and 10am].
2. The washing of automobiles, trucks, trailers, boats, airplanes and other types of mobile equipment not occurring upon the immediate premises of commercial car washes and commercial service stations and not in the immediate interest of the public health, safety and welfare shall be prohibited [car washing is currently allowed on irrigation days].
3. The watering of golf course fairways is prohibited [currently permitted on irrigation days between 8pm and 10am].
4. Use of water from fire hydrants shall be limited to fire fighting and/or other activities immediately necessary to maintaining the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Visalia [no current restriction other than prohibition on waste of water].
5. Commercial nurseries, commercial sod farmers, and similar establishments shall water only on designated days between the hours of 10am and 6pm and shall use only hand held hoses, drip irrigation systems, or hand held buckets [currently permitted on irrigation days between 8pm and 10am].
6. The emptying and refilling of water to swimming pools is prohibited [currently allowed by permit only].
7. The operation of any ornamental fountain or similar structure is prohibited [currently an ornamental fountain or other structure making similar use of water is prohibited unless the fountain uses a recycling system].

Because stage 4 is significantly more restrictive than stage 3, the council could elect to direct staff to make a revision to the ordinance implementing more restrictive measures than the current stage 3, but less restrictive than stage 4. Some of the measures council may want to consider:

- Reduce watering days from the current year-round three days to one day per week in the winter months. For example, watering between December 1 through March 1 is only allowed on one day a week in the city of Fresno.
- Prohibit the installation of new installations of cool-season grass (e.g., fescue). Cool-season grass is not adapted to the San Joaquin Valley climate and requires significantly more irrigation than warm-season grass such as Bermuda.
- Prohibit over-seeding with annual ryegrass. This is commonly practiced to keep warm-season grasses looking green during winter months when they are dormant and would be brown; however, over-seeding requires significantly more water use and actually reduces the vitality of the perennial lawn because it must compete with the ryegrass for nutrients when it comes out of dormancy.
- Prohibit the operation of ornamental fountains or similar features.
- Prohibit or limit the frequency of draining and refilling swimming pools.

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A New Way to Fund Education

CRAIG WHEATON, VUSD SUPERINTENDENT

This has been a big year for changes in education. Many of you have heard that we are implementing new, more rigorous grade level standards. Standards are what all students should know in each subject and at each grade level. Common Core Standards will require students to spend more time problem solving, thinking through critical issues, justifying their opinions with text references and facts, and sharing the results of their work with others.

It is not only standards that are changing. The basis of school district funding is also going through a fundamental change. Proposed by the governor and passed by the state legislators, the "Local Control Funding Formula" (LCFF) is a new way to fund school districts in California.

Without going into needless detail, over the last 40 years school districts have been funded by the state based on a formula that was developed from local property tax values. These varied widely from district to district because of the differences in property values. In addition, school districts were given "categories" of money to spend on very specific programs for specific purposes, e.g., to reduce class size, or to assist students who were not at grade level. The number of "categorical" programs grew over the years until there were dozens and dozens—all very specific and restrictive on how the money could be used.

The new law, the Local Control Funding Formula, consolidates all of the categorical programs and the base program into a more simple approach. Each district receives a base amount for each student. Then each district calculates the number of students from families in poverty, the number of "English Learners," and the number of students in Foster Youth program. For that total number of students, the district receives a "supplemental" amount of funds. The idea is that additional services are required for many students, and additional services cost more money. This is an "equity" model of funding and will provide more funds for districts that are high poverty districts. Visalia Unified benefits from this shift of funding.

So, what is the "Local Control" part of the change? In the past, districts were told how to spend funds based on many specific programs; now, each community can develop a plan to meet the local needs of students. This plan is called the "Local Control Accountability Plan" and is currently being developed here in Visalia Unified. There are eight general goals that must be considered for all students. They include areas such as meeting the Common Core Standards, increasing student achievement but also include areas like attendance, parent involvement, reducing suspensions, and improving school climate and safety.

If you would like to give your input or find out more about Visalia Unified's Local Control Accountability Plan, visit our website at www.vusd.org.

ObamaCare for the "Not-So-Large" Large Employer

DAVE MILLER

The Affordable Care Act is now the law of the land, and individuals and employers have seen changes including cancelled health plans and increased premiums. For small employers, these problems will intensify, but for large employers a whole new world opens next year.

"Large Employers," as defined by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), must begin offering health care coverage to their full-time workers and their children up to age 26. Failure to do so will subject these employers to large fines, penalties or "Taxes."

Large Employers are those with 50 or more full-time employees (FT's) or full-time equivalents employees (FTE's).

Coverage is "affordable" if employee contributions are less than 9.5% of:

- Employee's W-2 wages;
- Employee's monthly wages (hourly rate x 130 hours per month); or
- Federal Poverty Level for a single individual.

A plan must pay 60% of the cost of covered health services to provide "minimum value." The minimum value calculator is available online.

EMPLOYER PENALTIES

Starting in 2015, if an employer doesn't offer FT's insurance, and if at least one FT receives federal insurance subsidies in the individual exchange, the business will pay $2,000 per FT (minus the first 30). Example: a business with 50 FT's, two of whom are subsidized, would pay $40,000 = $2,000 x (50 – 30). The penalties will be adjusted in future years.

If an employer offers insurance and at least one FT receives insurance subsidies, it pays the lesser of $3,000 per subsidized FT OR $2,000 per FT (minus the first 30). So an offering large employer with two subsidized FT's would be fined $6,000. For a 50-employee employer with 14 or more subsidized FT's (above the tipping point for an employer of this size), the penalty would be $40,000.

LARGE EMPLOYERS MAY AVOID PENALTIES

However, you may be a large employer and yet have minimal impact from the ACA because of the makeup of your workforce or how you schedule them. Let's say you are an employer with five locations with a total of 100 employees. Your full-time employees and the FTE of your part-time employees total over 50 employees so that you are considered a large employer.

You have an office staff and manager at your main location as well as one manager at each location and cooks are your only full-time staff – and that is only 30 employees total. All the rest of the staff is part-time at less than 30 hours a week. In this circumstance, you will have no impact at all because of the way the penalty provisions in the ACA work. Note the following:

A large employer that does not provide health insurance will not receive a penalty on the first 30 full-time employees.

Part-time workers, (i.e., those under 30 hours a week) are not included in the penalty calculations, even though they are included in the determination of whether an employer is a large employer. An employer will not pay a penalty for any part-time worker, even if that part-time worker receives a premium credit for exchange coverage.

Just to make things a little more confusing. Let's say that during the holiday season you hire full time employees to work 30 hours or more a week, but they are let go at the end of the holiday season, having not worked 120 days or more. They are not included in the determination of large employer and you do not have to offer them health benefits. Nevertheless, you could face a penalty for each month that any full-time seasonal worker received a premium credit for exchange coverage.

Dave Miller is the president of Pacific Employers, which is a labor relations and safety consulting firm in Visalia since 1964, and which has more than 600 employer clients. For more information, call Pacific Employers at 733-4256, or stop by 306 N. Willis St., Visalia, or visit www.pacificemployers.com.

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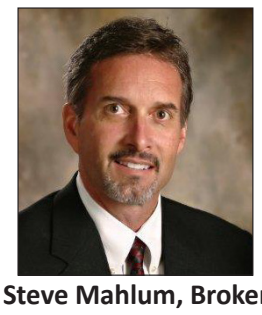

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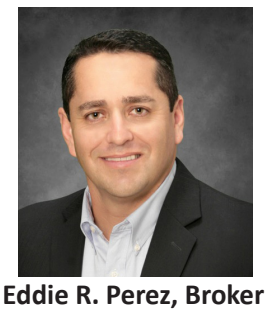

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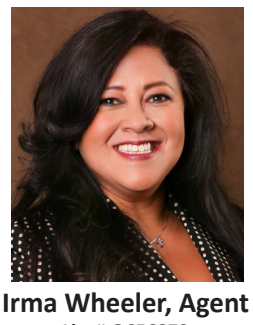

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Resolve to Have Healthier Teeth and Gums

DR. KREIGH SEDILLO

Resolve to have healthier teeth and gums in 2014. It's never too late to start good oral hygiene.

Here are three things you can do to reduce your chance of developing cavities:

1. Brush your teeth twice a day for two minutes
2. Eat healthy foods that limit added sugars in your diet
3. Snack less between meals

The health of your teeth and gums are a reflection of what you eat and how you maintain good oral practices. So, what should you eat to maintain healthy teeth? Here are a few suggestions:

Cheese, milk, plain yogurt, calcium-fortified tofu, leafy greens and almonds, provide high amounts of calcium and other nutrients. Meat, poultry, fish, milk and eggs are protein rich and great sources of phosphorus. Calcium and phosphorous help protect and rebuild tooth enamel.

Fruits and vegetables that are high in water and fiber provide a good balance against harmful sugars. They help wash away acids and food particles that can lead to tooth decay. Fruits and vegetables also contain vitamin C for healthy gums and vitamin A for building tooth enamel.

If healthy foods that are low in sugar are the solution to healthy teeth and gums, then candies and other sweets are often the problem. Bacteria in your mouth feed off of sugars contained in candy and sweets like cookies, cakes and muffins. The bacterium releases acid that erodes your teeth.

Likewise, sugary drinks – such as soda, lemonade, juice and sweetened coffee or tea (iced or hot) — are also harmful. They wash your teeth in sugar, also promoting tooth decay. The best drink for your mouth, without a doubt, is water.

One great resource for developing a healthy eating plan can be found at the U.S. Department of Agriculture website www.choosemyplate.gov. This website can educate young and old alike on healthy eating. It helps you develop menus and provides innovative recipes for a delicious and nutritious lifestyle.

Now is the time to pledge to yourself that 2014 will be the year that you build a bright, healthy smile for the future.

Dr. Kreigh Sedillo, who graduated from UCLA School of Dentistry, has been practicing in Visalia for the past 10 years. His practice, Smile Visalia, is located on Caldwell east of Court.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SEND YOUR LETTERS TO: editor@ourvalleyvoice.com

Re: Rainy Season

Regarding the editorial "The Rainy Season is Coming," I don't know how long the author has lived in Tulare County. I have lived here almost 65 years and my grandparents moved here in 1908. I know valley weather and it hasn't changed much. The assertion that rains have always come regularly in the past was good for quite a laugh. This is nothing new. 1975, 76 and 77 were among several periods that were very similar. It flooded in 1978. There have been droughts and periods of extended high temperatures numerous times. To claim that the current conditions are due to man-made climate change is an assertion that takes a giant leap of faith. More simply put, it is absurd.

Wilbur Bergen

Editor's response: *What's absurd is the notion that it matters how old you are or when your family arrived. My family has been here since before 1908 — does that make my argument stronger than yours?*

Though the world hasn't warmed the past 15 years as predicted by computer models, change is inevitable as we continue to pump in CO2 into the air. Sooner or later warming will hit. Reality continues to be more complicated than the models we devise to describe and predict it. Perhaps instead of a generalized warming we will see extreme gyration in weather as more solar energy absorbed by the CO2 circulates, amplifying things.

You need to get up on the latest view of population growth. Birthrates have fallen and it is now expected that after peaking sometime between 2040 and 2100 somewhere between 9 and 11 billion the earth's population will decline some and be more or less stable. Already a number of countries are in population decline - Japan, Germany for instance. I've always thought the problem wasn't too many babies, but not enough love and wisdom! The earth has enough arable soil that if it was properly farmed it could easily provide enough food for 20 billion - especially if we tend vegetarian. Ditto for other resources and human needs if we recycle, conserve, do it creatively and green, develop new technology and methods and get away from fossil fuels. The billions of people to my mind represent potentialities, diversity, community, more creative minds and hands instead of teeming parasites wrecking things as some think.

I am a local math, science, and social science teacher - I have multiple credentials.

Thank you for the new *Valley Voice*. I rejoiced to see it hit the stands. Hope you prosper with it.

Jeff Alexander
Visalia, CA

Can You Make a Difference?

How many of you reading this would like to make a positive difference while on this Earth? Do you have great dreams and aspirations? Or just something small that's manageable but still you can leave your "mark." Do you sabotage your idea thinking " I can't do this, it's to much for me"? Or some other excuse your mind makes up to keep you from fulfilling your desires? Yes? It happens to many of us, including me at times in my life.

What is it that keeps you from making this difference? Are you afraid of what others might think? Do you not feel good enough about yourself and what you are capable of? Or is it financial, having enough money to do what you want? Funny how different ideas creep into our heads and keep us from doing what we want to do. Even the simplest thing like picking up a piece of garbage while walking Downtown might make you nervous of what someone might think of your action. My suggestion is: do it anyway! Better yet, make sure if possible to do it when there are other people around so that not only are you being a positive example, you are stepping into your fears!

Do you ever take time to look at your "blocks", the reasons that inhibit you from moving forward in your dreams/lives/ideas that you would like to fulfill whether small or large, to see what they are and dump them because they don't serve you in a positive way? This is something that I have been doing of recent times and am in the process of changing my vibe so that i can do what I would like to be doing, to let more goodness into my life, to make more of a positive impact on this Earth, whether big like having a house where I grow food for me and the locals or just simple things (which we all can do) like picking up the garbage on Main Street which I quite often do because I like to have a clean environment to live.

Everyone can have something better in their lives, whatever it may be, as long as we are willing to do the work to get us to that fulfillment.....

Blessings and much success,

Barry Klein
Visalia, CA

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Black Tie

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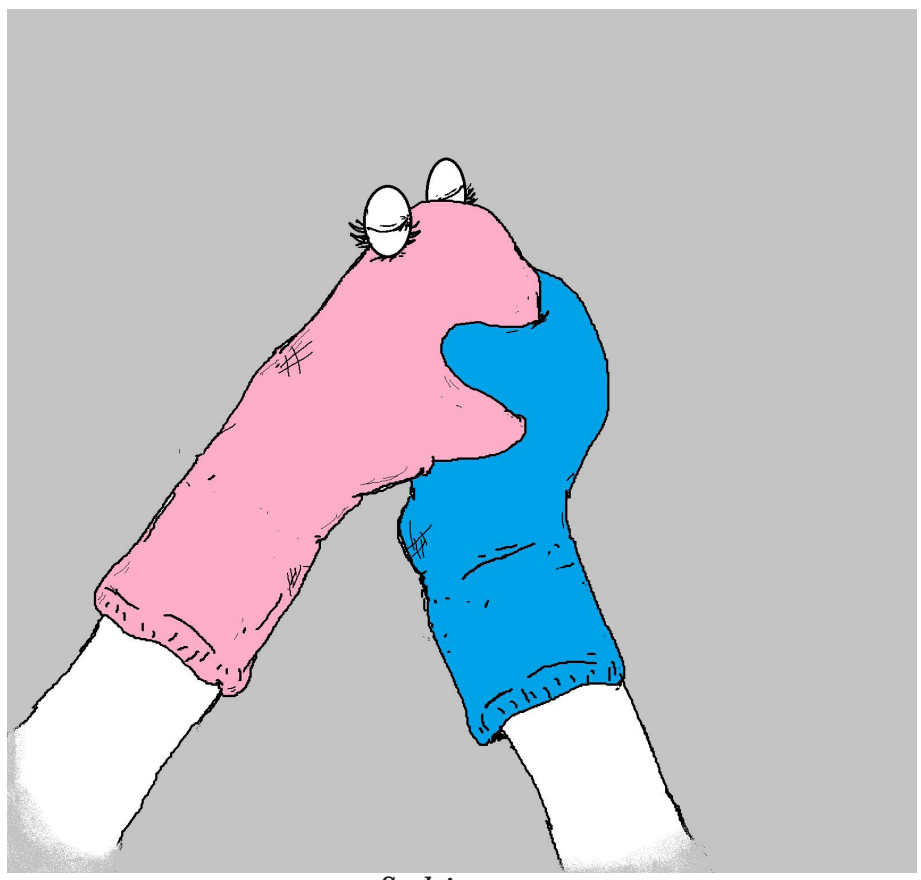

Sock it to me.

Technology and the Real Estate Industry

WILLIAM MENKE

Technology has transformed the real estate industry. Home shoppers now go to the Internet to browse properties even before approaching a lender to see what they might be able to afford. The introduction of Internet Data Exchange (IDX) software into the real estate industry has lifted the veil of the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) for the consumer. As such, the entire dynamic of the realtor-client relationship has rapidly evolved with the technology. Experience and service are now what consumers want and need in a realtor. The days of the real estate agent as the gatekeeper of information are dead.

Almost every client I have worked with used Zillow to evaluate properties prior to speaking with me. As stated on their website, Zillow's goal is to empower consumers. Zillow is striving to change the way buyers and sellers approach real estate decisions, and how they communicate with realty professionals. Zillow's "living database" of over 110 million U.S. homes includes: homes for sale, homes for rent, and homes not currently on the market. The most valued and controversial feature of Zillow is the Zestimate. Zillow uses a proprietary formula (including public and user submitted data) to estimate home values—even for homes not on the market. Zestimate's in the Central Valley are, at best, arbitrary—new subdivision residents and custom homeowners beware! Nonetheless, half of the buyers I have met in the last two years have demanded Zestimates be used as factors in determining their offer amounts.

Trulia is the second most client-referenced website. With over 3.5 million viewable properties for sale on their site, Trulia presents an impressive database for searching. Additionally, Trulia provides neighborhood reviews and real estate agent recommendations. Trulia claims that none of their funding comes from the real estate industry, allowing them to be independent and unbiased. Many other websites such as realtor.com and even local broker sites like Guarantee.com provide accurate, MLS-derived listings; however, most buyers/sellers eventually find their way to Zillow or Trulia.

Bargain-hunting buyers and savvy investors have help, too. RealtyTrac is a website dedicated to foreclosure properties. According to their website, detailed data on over 1.2 million default, auction, and bank-owned properties from more than 2,200 U.S. counties can be viewed at RealtyTrac. This is the largest website featuring this information. RealtyTrac supplies certain foreclosure data to other sites such as Trulia and Zillow, as well as to several major news outlets. To have full access to RealtyTrac, you must register for a free trial or subscribe. This website is a favorite of my individual investors.

Buyers frequently seek information about crime in their prospective neighborhoods. CrimeReports and SpotCrime are two major websites catering to buyer needs in this area. Both CrimeReports and SpotCrime have smart phone accessibility and easily managed alerts that can be established for a radius around any specific address. Even basic information on sex offender locations can be obtained from these sites. Half of the buyers/investors I met with in the last year had already utilized one of these websites (or a similar competitor). SpotCrime data is derived from police departments, news reports and user-generated content. CrimeReports gathers information from a variety of government entities depending on the location.

There is a lot of accessible information out there, but the technology can't do everything. Although I am biased, a realtor is still your best option for intelligently pursuing a home—he or she has done it all before, and done it recently. They know how to find what you want, negotiate an acceptable price, and navigate the often perilous paperwork. Experience and service are what your realtor can and should bring to the table.

William Menke is a realtor with the Guarantee Real Estate Flex Office. He can be reached at William@Guarantee.com.

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Further details may be easily obtained by calling the phone number listed above and asking for the Easy As 1, 2, 3 Operator.

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The 2014 Sofa Art exhibition features work by John Friedrich.

Sofa Art 2014 'Reads a Good Book'

KEVIN BOWMAN

The phenomenon known as the Sofa Art Show returns to Arts Visalia for the 19th year. Equal parts community event and art exhibition, the Sofa Art Show is a highly-anticipated annual art show where any person who has an inclination may display their artistic creation in the show, so long as the artwork follows the annual theme and, most importantly, includes an image of a sofa, couch, davenport, divan, seat, stool, bench, etc.

This year, with the theme "Sofa Art Reads a Good Book," participating artists were asked to create a work of "Sofa Art," with a nod to the literary arts. Think of the classics of literature, the Homeric epics, Shakespeare, Lord Byron, Dickens, Austen or Shelley. Perhaps a bit of lighter reading offers an artist just the right inspiration. Louis L'Amour, Stephen King or Jackie Collins may come to mind, though those artists with a love for the "historical" romance novel were reminded that a little Fabio goes a long way!

And therein rests the fun behind the Sofa Art show: how does one translate such a preposterous theme into a working piece of art? The solutions the artists will find range from the profound to the clever pun, the playfully silly to the artistically amazing. The individuals who submit artworks range from the professional to the occasional hobbyist and everything in between.

One of the unsung benefits of the Sofa Art Show is that for so many of the participating artists, this is their entry point to exhibiting, and in some cases, creating art. Over the years, Sofa Art Show artists have found the inspiration to pursue their love of art, to take classes and to exhibit

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Air Supply performing in the Philippines. Photo by Paul Chin.

Air Supply to Land on Tachi Stage on February 20th

Air Supply, best known for such pop hits as "Lost in Love," "All Out of Love" and "The One that You Love," will perform in concert at Tachi Palace on Thursday, February 20.

The duo that would become known as Air Supply – Graham Russell and Russell Hitchcock – met on May 12, 1975, the first day of rehearsals for "Jesus Christ Superstar" in Sydney, Australia. They became instant friends with their common love for The Beatles and, of course, singing. After the show's performances, they would play pizza parlors, coffee bars and nightclubs with just one guitar and two voices. They quickly gained a reputation for great harmonies and for the original songs that Russell was constantly writing.

They made a demo on a cassette and took it to every record company in Sydney. Everyone turned it down but one — CBS Records — which admired their unique style. They made a single in one afternoon and it shot to number one on the national charts. That same year, they opened for Rod Stewart across Australia and then throughout the U.S. and Canada playing all of the famous huge venues before Stewart would take the stage. They found new fans, but did not yet break the U.S. market.

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Brian Regan Brings Comedy to Visalia Fox Theatre

STEVE PASTIS

Comedian Brian Regan will perform at the Visalia Fox Theatre on Sunday, February 16, as part of his current cross-country comedy tour. He has performed in more than 80 cities a year every year since 2005, and is often seen on late night TV. His 26 appearances on "The Late Show with David Letterman" are the most of any comedian on the CBS show.

Regan revealed the secret to becoming known as a "premier comedian" to the Voice.

"What you do is open up a thesaurus and try to find words that mean that you're a good comedian," he said, with a minimum amount of seriousness.

"I've been doing it for a while, and I've been honored to have a little bit of a following out there," he explained. "I've done a handful of spots on Letterman and with the help of other comedians have gathered a little bit of respect."

Regan's creative process is rather simple. "For the initial spark, I don't do anything," he said. "I pretty much just go through my day as I usually do it, and then I see something that strikes me as funny." He then develops his observations as comedy bits "with a beginning, a middle and an end." He videotapes his performances because "sometimes some of the best writing will happen on stage."

Regan says that other comedians don't influence his act. "I try not to be overly influenced by anybody," he said, adding that this has been his approach since he started. "This was before computers. It was before the wheel and it

Brian Regan

was before fire. My initial thoughts as a comedian had to come out of my own head."

Regan first became interested in performing comedy while a student at Heidelberg College in Ohio, believing that he was better suited to performing comedy than he was to continuing his education.

"I had trouble waking up," he admitted. "There was a comedian performing at our college and I looked at my watch and it was 8pm. I couldn't wake up for class, but I could wake up for this."

Regan briefly considered the suggestion that his comedy is creatively channeled anger.

"A lot of the recent stuff is that," he said. "I like to comment about the world

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February Concert Features Locals as Soloists

DONNA OROZCO

The Tulare County Symphony is made up of many talented musicians, and four of them will be featured at the 7:30pm concert on Saturday, February 8, at the Visalia Fox Theatre. The concert will conclude with Shostakovich's most popular work, "Symphony No. 5."

'The Poet and the Muse' by Saint-Saens

Concertmaster Susan Doering and cellist Dieter Wulfhorst were asked by music director Bruce Kiesling to consider playing individual solos with the orchestra, but the husband-wife team wanted to play something together.

"We feel that the piece is a musical alliance between the violin as the Muse and the cello as the Poet," they said. "We find it to be a work of intimate sensitivity, a conversation between two individuals, in which the warm tones and sublime colors of the violin combine with the vibrant and sensuous harmonies of the cello. There are wide ranges of colors and emotions and you can hear as each instrument embodies the characters of the Muse and the Poet."

Concertmaster Susan Doering and cellist Dieter Wulfhorst

The lyricism of the music has a simple, pure beauty, drawing attention to the poetic side of Saint-Saens' nature. The piece was first conceived in 1909 (and premiered on June 7, 1910 in London) as a violin/cello duo to be played by two virtuosos with piano accompaniment. Saint-Saens later transcribed the piano part for orchestra.

Doering and Wulfhorst have been playing together since 1986 and were married in 1993. They met at the National Music Camp in Interlochen, Michigan, playing chamber music, specifically a Mozart Flute Quartet and other pieces. They

Continued on p. 24 »

Clark Center to Showcase 'The Art of Drinking in Japan'

The Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture will present "Kanpai: The Art of Drinking in Japan," featuring works from the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, as well as from Gordon Brodfuehrer, Clark Center board member. The exhibition, which runs February 11 to June 26, is organized by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) and curated by Dr. Andreas Marks, head of the Department of Japanese and Korean Art at MIA, and Clo Pazera, Clark Center curatorial assistant.

"Eight Drunken Sages," by Watanabe Nagaku (1767-1813)

As in other parts of the world, drinking alcohol is an important and multifarious element of social and cultural life in Japan today. From office workers bonding after work, to the tasting of fine domestic whiskeys, to ceremonial cups shared in a wedding ceremony, fermented drink is a social lubricant, a subject of connoisseurship, a sealer of fate and fortune. According to legend, rice wine was invented by the native gods of Japan, and making offerings of wine to them guarantees their good will. Since the Heian period (794 to 1185), toso, spiced medicinal rice wine, is drunk on New Year's to chase off impurities and bring long life.

For many centuries of Japan's history, cultural emanations swept over from China, which was highly respected. Confucianism, which provided an important ethical framework in Japan, endorsed the pleasures of the flesh in the precept, "eat and drink, man and woman—the greatest human desires reside in them," as it is stated in the Chinese Book of Rites.

When speaking of drinking alcohol in a historical sense, once speaks of rice wine or sake. For more than 2,000 years, sake has been drunk in Japan and is considered to be its national drink. It is consumed ritually in religious ceremonies and festivals, as well as social events. Sake breweries were established at the Imperial Court in Kyoto towards the end of the first millennium. Today however, beer production is seven times that of sake.

The use of sake supported the rise of a diversity of different kinds of vessels for drinking and serving such as cups, flasks and ewers. A large section of "Kanpai: The Art of Drinking in Japan" showcases such objects created by living ceramic artists, representing many of the important traditional ceramic areas and styles like shino, oribe and karatsu.

The role of drink is also reflected in Japanese painting. Famous drinking parties like the gathering at the Orchid Pavilion in Zhejiang Province, China, in 353, were immortalized in East Asian imagery. Ike Taiga (1723-1776), the celebrated literati painter, painted a hanging scroll of this subject that celebrates the sophistication and gregariousness of literati culture.

The Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture is located at 15770 Tenth Ave. in Hanford. For more information, call 582-4915 or visit www.ccjac.org.

Rehearsing a scene where the 'Little Women' are missing their dad who is off at war are (left to right): Kaley McConnaughey (Beth), Casandra Casteneda (Meg), Lindsey Weeks (Marmee, their mother), Lauren Adaska (Jo) and Mikayla Hays (Amy).

'Little Women' Finally Comes to Visalia Stage

STACY GALVAN

The Redwood High School Drama Department will present its theatrical production of the Tony-award winning musical "Little Women" at the L.J. Williams Theater in Visalia at 7pm on February 20, 21 and 22. This will be Redwood's 56th annual all-school show, and will also be the first production ever by any theater troupe or school of "Little Women" in the area.

The RHS tradition of doing musicals dates back to the inauguration of Visalia High School. It is one of the few programs at the high school level that includes all aspects of the school. Woodshop, drafting, graphic arts, stagecraft, drama, band, dance, choir, English, business, and other departments come together to help put on the show. The school allows all students to audition and participate in the show.

Based on Louisa May Alcott's novel – and her own family experiences – the story, turned musical, follows the adventures of Jo, Meg, Beth and Amy March as they grow up in Civil War America. The beloved story of the March sisters is timeless and deals with issues as relevant today as when they were written.

"Little Women" embodies the complete theatrical experience, a night filled with laughter, tears and a lifting of the spirit. The powerful score soars with the sounds of personal discovery, heartache and hope – the sounds of a young America finding its voice. "Little Women" earned the Tony award in 2005 for Best Musical.

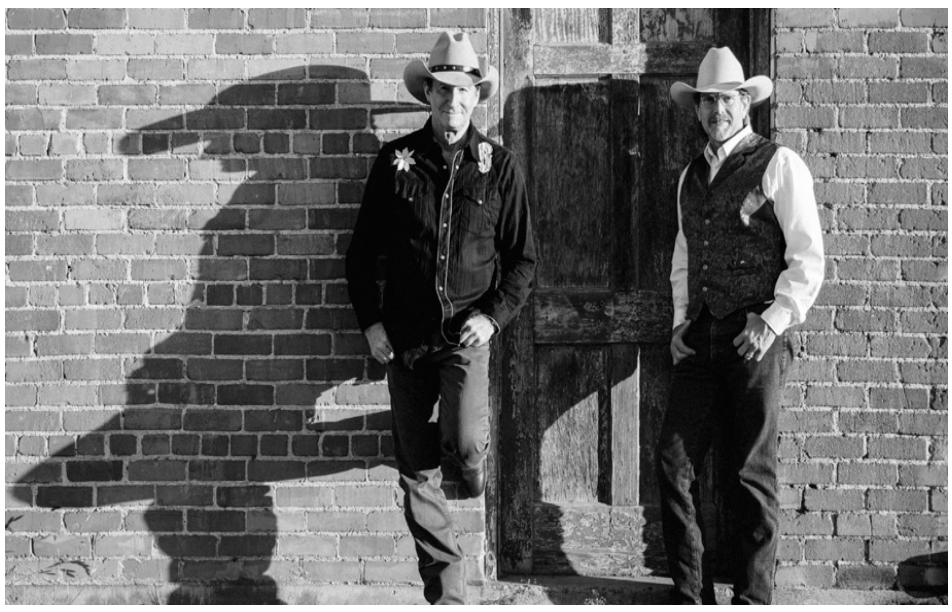
Tickets are $12 and can be purchased at the RHS Finance Center and The Ruby Slipper PAA. For more information, email rhsdramavisalia@yahoo.com.

Peña Planetarium to Present 'Perfect Little Planet'

The Sam B. Peña Planetarium, operated by the Tulare County Office of Education, will show "Perfect Little Planet" at 7pm on Friday, February 21.

The film presents our solar system through a new set of eyes – a family from another star system seeking the perfect vacation spot. Fly over the surface of Pluto, dive over the ice cliffs of Miranda, sail through the rings of Saturn, feel the lightning storms on Jupiter, and walk on the surface of Mars. .

Peña Planetarium is located at 2500 W. Burrel Ave. Tickets are available at the planetarium office only between noon and 7pm on the day of the show. Tickets are $4 for adults and $3 for children under 12. No late seating once the doors close. For more information, call 737-6334 or visit www.tcoe.org/planetarium.



Hannah and Talbot

The Quebe Sisters Band

Mavericks Coffee House Offers Two Concerts in February

Hannah and Talbot on Saturday, February 15, and The Quebe Sisters Band on Friday, February 21.

Lon Hannah, a member of the multiple award-winning Sons of the San Joaquin, and Terry Talbot, founder of the Mason Proffit band that MSN Entertainment said "helped to invent country-rock," have just released their first album, Hannah and Talbot, which offers a blend of western, old country, folk, Americana and gospel music.

Since 1988, Hannah has been performing with the Sons of the San Joaquin to audiences all over the world – from Pakistan to Switzerland. The Sons have won four Wrangler Awards from the National Cowboy Hall of Fame; nine Western Music Association awards; two awards from the Academy of Western Artists (AWA); and the American Cowboy Culture Award from the National Cowboy Symposium in Lubbock, Texas. In addition, the Sons were inducted into the Western Music Association Hall of Fame.

Talbot has been Mavericks Coffee House and Roasting Company will present two shows this month – recognized for his musical talent since he and his brother John formed the country rock band Mason Proffit in the late 1960s. Justin Farrar of Rhapsody, commented that, "the Eagles' desperado/outlaw image owes a lot to the brothers Talbot. So if you want to pass Country 101, you need a serious dose of the Proffit." The Talbot brothers then formed a duo and opened for The Eagles, and Terry Talbot went on to perform as a guitarist for Glen Campbell, Chad Mitchell, and Sonny and Cher. He has recorded more than 30 albums, some nominated for Grammy and Dove awards.

The Quebe Sisters Band

When Grace, Sophia and Hulda Quebe (pronounced Kway-bee) raise their fiddles and play, audiences marvel. The Quebe Sisters Band performs a blend of western swing, vintage country, bluegrass, jazz and swing standards, and features Texas-style fiddling.

Presented with the Crescendo Award by the Western Music Association, and the Western Swing Album of the Year from the Academy of Western Artists, the QSB is touring behind its latest album, Timeless. Performance highlights include appearances at the Grand Ole Opry, the Kennedy Center, New York City's Lincoln Center, the Ryman Auditorium, the Marty Stuart Show, the Eddie Stubbs' Show on WSM, the Ernest Tubb Midnite Jamboree (as host band), the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, and the National Folk Festival. In addition, the QSB has appeared in concert with Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder, Merle Haggard, Asleep at the Wheel, Larry Gatlin & the Gatlin Brothers, Riders in the Sky, and Marty Stuart. They have also performed for billionare/ukulele enthusiast Warren Buffett and for President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush.

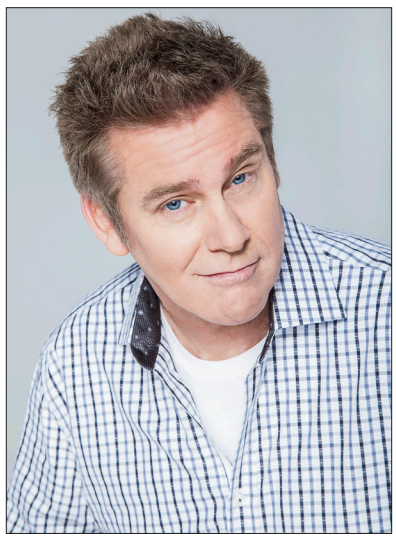
Both shows begin at 7pm. Tickets for the February 15th show are $25. Tickets for the February 21st show are $35. Seating is limited. For tickets or more information, call 624-1400, stop by Mavericks Coffee House at 238 E. Caldwell, Visalia, or visit www.mavericksfeehouse.com.

Regan

Continued from p. 17

we live in. I mean no ill will to anybody, but at the same time don't get in my way. I can take the frustration and anger and say maybe other people can relate to it."

Whatever frustration Regan expresses on stage, he does so without using "blue" material. "When I'm on stage, I usually work clean," he said. "If I'm offstage with friends, I'm capable of a four-letter word."



Brian Regan. Photo by Jerry Metellus

He explained that most of his shows are at theaters instead of nightclubs. "At theaters, sometimes people bring a 12-year-old or a nine-year-old. I try to be cognizant of that. I try not to talk about things that would make their brains explode."

In ten years, Regan sees himself doing one of three things. "I'd like to either still be doing this, or retired or with a TV show that's going pretty strong," he said, revealing his interest in following the path taken by such comedians as Jerry Seinfeld and Roseanne Barr.

"We've gone out there and tried to convince people to do a sitcom kind of thing," he said. "Sometimes they're looking to do a variation of the kind of things that have already been successful. I'd kind of like to do something new."

And if Regan was able to do a television show his way, "I would like it to reflect my life, how it feels to me as a comedian." He quoted Seinfeld about how comedians can successfully make the transition from stand-up to sitcom, "The trick is to take their comedy and pour it into another container."

With tax season on the horizon, Regan was asked if he lists his occupation as "comedian" on his 1040. He said he does, but that he worries about being questioned about his occupation at an audit.

"I don't want to bomb over the desk," he said.

Tickets for the 7:30pm show are $25-$47, and are available at foxvisalia.org. For more information about the performer, visit www.BrianRegan.com.

Strange Vine Brings 'Sierra Sound' to Cellar Door on February 21

AARON GOMES

Strange Vine

Fresno-based Strange Vine has been steadily gaining national attention, building crowds in cities across the U.S. the old-fashioned way: by playing amazing live shows. The band just announced that it will be headlining a Bottom of the Hill concert in conjunction with this year's annual San Francisco Noise Pop Festival. Prior to the big festival show, Strange Vine has chosen to play a Cellar Door concert for all their Valley fans on Friday, Feb. 21.

For those of you who don't already know, Strange Vine delivers an energetic fusion of blues, psychedelic and traditional American rock. It's a sound born of California's Sierra Nevada Mountains, from two men who were raised there. Ian Blesse plays drums and Rhodes piano (simultaneously), while Toby Cordova fleshes out the songs with a rotating arsenal of guitars (including one made from a cigar box). Both contribute vocals toward a rich, layered sound that's greater than the sum of its parts. The band is also in the middle of recording its next full-length album, so the set will include some new material.

Los Angeles-based band Chad & The Meatbodies will play the middle slot. Band leader Chad Ubovich has built a reputation for himself playing in bands with Ty Segall like Fuzz, as well as rocking in Mikal Cronin's band. When he plays with the Meatbodies, the sound is heavy, groovy, psychedelic and head-banging.

Visalia locals Evelyn play the opening slot. The group is currently recording its debut record, mixing surf guitar-esque riffs, thick guitar and bass tones, with heavy drumming dynamics.

Tickets for the 9:30pm 21+ show are $7 and available at ticketweb.com. To hear songs by the bands, visit www.strangevinemusic.com and/or www.facebook.com/Meatbodies.

Aaron Gomes is the founder and owner/operator of Sound N Vision Foundation, a nonprofit organization that brings indie bands to the area and sponsors local art events.

Air Supply

Continued from p. 17

Back in Australia, they had to start again and made a record called Life Support. On this record were some treasures, including "Lost in Love," which went Top 10 in Australia and somehow found its way to music industry executive Clive Davis in New York.

Davis immediately signed Air Supply to Arista Records, and in 1980, "Lost in Love" leaped to the top of the charts. Air Supply was on its way. The second single was "All Out of Love," and that also moved quickly up the charts.

The duo's albums, Lost in Love, The One That You Love, Now & Forever, and The Greatest Hits sold in excess of 20 million copies. Air Supply was the first Western group to tour China, Taiwan and countless other countries that had previously not allowed pop music across their borders.

Bingo Hall doors open at 6pm for the 7:30pm show. Tickets are $30, $50 and $70. Visit tachipalace.com for more information.

Budweiser EVENT CALENDAR

MUSIC

February

Feb. 7-8 – Keith and the Crawdads – 7-10pm
Every Friday and Saturday, Keith and the Crawdads are featured at Crawdaddys Visalia. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Feb. 8 – Tulare County Symphony – 7:30pm
TCSO musicians take their turn as resident artists in front of the orchestra at the Visalia Fox Theatre. Tickets from $30 to $39.50. For information, visit foxvisalia.org.

Feb. 8 – Wes Hardin Band – 8-10pm
Wes Hardin Band will host a CD release party at the Cellar Door in downtown Visalia. Cover is $5 for this 21+ concert. For information, visit cellardoor101.com.

Feb. 11 – Salsa Tuesdays – 7pm
Every Tuesday night at The Cellar Door features beginner dance lessons, music and dancing follows. Cover is $5 for this 21+ event. Partners not required. For information, call 287-7067.

Feb. 11 – Cody Torres – 7-10pm
On Tuesdays, singer and musician Cody Torres performs at Crawdaddys Visalia playing classic Country and Rock hits. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Feb. 14 – Back to Black: A Tribute to Amy Winehouse
The Amy Winehouse tribute band, Back to Black, will have a special Valentine's Day Concert at the Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St. Visalia. $10 (21+). For information, visit cellardoor101.com.

Feb. 14 – Marble Fork Band – 6:30-8:30pm
The Marble Fork Band performs at 210 Cafe' Visalia on Valentine's Day. The band is also scheduled to perform on the second Friday each month through April. Their Unique Folk Rock mix features chapman stick 10-string instrument, acoustic guitar and percussion.

Feb. 14 – Centro de Convenciones De Visalia – 7:30pm-1am
An evening of performances will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. For tickets and information call 713-4040.

Feb. 14-15 – The 2nd Floor Night Club – 10pm-2am
Every Friday and Saturday, Crawdaddys Visalia's 2nd Floor Night Club features DJs and dancing to hip-hop, techno, disco and more. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Feb. 15 – Hannah and Talbot – 7pm
Mavericks Coffee House presents a new duo of award-winning musicians, Hannah and Talbot. Lon Hannah of the Sons of San Joaquin and Terry Talbot of the Mason Proffit Band have released a new album and will perform at Mavericks. For tickets, $25, call 624-1400 or visit Mavericks, 238 E. Caldwell, Visalia.

Feb. 20 – 3's A Crowd – 7-10pm
On Thursdays, 3's A Crowd performs at Crawdaddys Visalia, 333 E Main Street. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Feb. 20 – Air Supply – 7:30pm
Air Supply will perform in concert at Tachi Palace. Bingo Hall doors open at 6pm for the 7:30pm show. Tickets: $30, $50 and $70. Visit tachipalace.com for information.

Feb. 21 – The Quebe Sisters Band – 7pm
The Quebe Sisters Band will Perform at Mavericks Coffee House. Limited Seating. For tickets call 624-1400 or visit Mavericks Coffee House, 238 E. Caldwell, Visalia.

Feb. 22 – The Harlem Renaissance – 6pm
In celebration of Black History Month, The Harlem Renaissance featuring live musical performances will be held at Hanford Civic Auditorium, 400 N. Douty Street. Doors open at 5pm and the program begins at 6pm. Tickets – $10 for adults, $5 for children – are available at Hanford Parks and Recreation Office and Longfield Center.

Feb. 22 – A Tribute to Legendary Ladies of Country Music – 7:30pm
The Lindsay Community Theater will present A Tribute to Legendary Ladies of Country Music, featuring Sonya Diane Jones. For tickets, visit lindsaycommunitytheater.primetix.com.

Feb. 26 – David Laswell and the Rounders – 7-10pm
On Wednesdays, its KJUG Country Music night and David Laswell and the Rounders at Crawdaddys Visalia, 333 E Main Street. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Feb. 28 – Audra McDonald Concert – 7:30pm
Two-time Grammy Award Winner Audra McDonald, a Valley native, will perform at the L.J. Williams Theater. For tickets visit, ticketfly.com.

March

March 5 – San Fermen + Son Lux – 9-11:30pm
San Fermen + Son Lux will perform at the Cellar Door in Visalia. For information, visit cellardoor101.com.

March 6 – Merle Haggard – 8pm
Merle Haggard will perform at the Hanford Fox Theatre. Tickets, $55, $65 and $75, are available at foxhanford.com or 584-7823.

March 9 – Calidore Quartet - 3pm
As part of its North American and European Tour, Calidore Quartet will perform at the Main Street Theater in Visalia. For information and tickets, visit threeriversperformingarts.org.

EVENTS

February

Through Feb. 7 – Tulare Christian School's Annual Sock Drive
Tulare Christian School will be collecting donations for its annual sock drive through Feb. 7. New men's and women's socks can be dropped off at the school office at 470 N. Gem Street, Tulare or in front of the school during pick up time, 2:30-3:30pm. For information, contact Socorro Mercado at 723-6484 or Amy Babb at 250-3901.

Feb. 6 – Tri-County Walnut Day – 7am
The 45th annual Tri-County Walnut day will be held at the Holiday Inn in Visalia. The UC Cooperative Extension event informs growers on the latest information and issues affecting the walnut industry. Cost is $15. For information, visit ucanr.edu/tcwd14.

Feb. 6 – Tachi Palace Fights 18 – 6pm
Joe Soto of Porterville will take on Jeremiah Labiano of Hayward for the Bantamweight Championship. Featherweight, heavyweight, and flyweight events also featured. Tickets: $34, $45, $65, $125, available at tachipalace.com.

Feb. 7 C.H.A.P. Spring Schedule Begins – 7pm
Porterville College's Cultural Historical Awareness Program (C.H.A.P.) will begin its spring schedule in the PC Theater with "Moving On: What to Expect When You Transfer to a Four-Year University" by Dr. Jeff Yoshimi, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Cognitive Science, University of California, Merced and Jose Rodarte, a UC Merced student. For information about C.H.A.P. visit www.portervillecollege.edu/CHAP.

Feb. 7-9 – Visalia Home & Patio Springfest
The 21st Annual Visalia Home & Patio Springfest, held at the Visalia Convention Center, will feature more than 350 home and garden displays. For information, visit VisaliaHomeShows.com.

Feb. 8 – Poker for Pets Charity Tournament
Valley Oak SPCA will hold a Texas Hold 'em Charity Poker Tournament at the Visalia Moose Lodge, 3360 S. Fairway Street. Minimum $40 buy-in (2,000 chips). Register by Jan. 31 and receive an addition 1,000 free chips. Payouts determined upon the number of players. Call (559) 713-4694 for more information.

Feb. 8 – Exeter Policeman's Ball – 6-11pm
Exeter Policeman's Ball will be held at Veterans Memorial Building. For information, call 592-3102.

Feb. 9 – 4th Annual Phylum Feast
As part of the Darwin Day celebration honoring science and critical thinking, the South Valley Skeptics will hold its 4th annual Phylum Feast in Visalia. For information and reservations visit sovalskeptics.org.

Feb. 11 – Kings County Labor Law Workshop – 7:45-10am
The Kings County Labor Law Workshop will be held at a new location at Veteran's Hall, 410 N. Irwin St. The Kings County Employer Advisory Council in partnership with the Employment Development Department will present the workshop. Check-in is 7:45am. There is no cost to attend, however reservations can be made by calling 585-3551 or emailing james.bradford@edd.ca.gov.

Feb. 11-13 – World Ag Expo 2014
The International Agri-Center will host the World Ag Expo in Tulare. For information, visit worldagexpo.com.

Feb. 13 – MV Transportation Ribbon Cutting – 9-9:30am
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce will welcome MV Transportation with a ribbon cutting at 525 N. Cain St. For information, visit visaliachamber.org.

Feb. 13 – Exeter Chamber Mixer – 5pm
The Exeter Chamber of Commerce Mixer will be hosted by Tricia Kirksey Real Estate.

Feb. 14-16 – Open Air Peddler's Market
The market featuring antiques and collectibles is held at 558 E. Palm, in Exeter. Questions or dealer inquires may contact Karen at 592-1940 or Paul at 936-1487.

Feb. 15 – Aloha Central Valley
Aloha Spirit International Championships will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. Spectator admission is $12. Children under 2 years old admitted free. Spectators are allowed to photograph and videotape from their seats. The Golden State Spirit Association awards collegiate scholarships. For information, visit alohaspiritchamps.com.

Feb. 15 – Rawhide Annual Job Fair – 9am-12pm
The Visalia Rawhide will hold its annual job fair at Rawhide Ballpark, 300 N. Giddings Street in Visalia. Positions are available in a variety of areas, including concessions, food preparation, retail and ushering. For a head start in applying, prospective staff members are encouraged to pre-register at RawhideBaseball.com. To pre-register, complete the application at www.rawhidebaseball.com and return to the ticket office on Giddings St. Applications may also be scanned and emailed to jobfair@rawhidebaseball.com or faxed to 739-7732.

Feb. 15 – Snow Shoe Walk
Strap on your snow shoes to get ready to search for the biggest of the big trees. The Sequoia Natural History Association tour will start in the giant forest. This educational adventure is considered moderately strenuous. Advanced reservations are required. For information, visit sequoiahistory.org.

Feb. 15 – Rollin' Relics Car Club Dinner Dance – 4:30-11pm
The Rollin' Relics Car Club is holding its annual dinner dance at Nuckols Ranch in Porterville. The theme is 50s but theme dress is not required to attend. The event features a catered dinner and evening dancing to StillWater, a local band out of Visalia playing music from the 50s-70's. Event photos will be available at no charge. Silent dessert auction and raffle prizes add to the evening's entertainment. For tickets, $30, call 805-3379 or 562-0601.

Feb. 19 – A Celebration of Black History Month: Buffalo Soldiers in Sequoia National Park – 11:30am-12:30pm
As part of the Porterville College's Cultural Historical Awareness Program (C.H.A.P.), a multimedia presentation will be given by Dave Humphrey, Cultural Resources Program manager, Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Parks at PC Theater. For more information about C.H.A.P., visit www.portervillecollege.edu/CHAP.

Feb. 20 – 2014 Labor Law Update – 9-10am
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce continues its monthly seminar series, Visalia Business Academy, with 2014 Labor Law Update presented by Verla Oliver, SinglePoint Outsourcing Inc. The seminars are held on the third Thursday each month at Brandman University's Visalia Campus, 649 S. County Center Dr. Reservations are required, and may be made by calling 734-5876. Tickets are $15 for members, $30 for non-members or $250 for an annual pass.

Feb. 21-23 – Life Leadership Conference
Life Leadership Conference will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. For information, visitvisalia.org.

Feb. 21 – Perfect Little Planet at Peña Planetarium – 7pm
Discover our solar system through a new set of eyes - a family from another star system seeking the perfect vacation spot. The planetarium is located at 2500 W. Burrel Ave. in Visalia. Tickets are available at the planetarium office only between noon and 7pm on the day of the show. Tickets are $4 for adults and $3 for children under 12. No late seating is offered once the planetarium doors close. For information, call 737-6334.

Feb. 22 – SJVCSS Historic Hanford Train Trip
San Joaquin Valley Council for the Social Studies will hold a tour of Historic Hanford.

KIDS

February

Feb. 7 – Young Adults Book Club – 6pm
The Tulare Public Library is starting a new book club focusing on Young Adult books, the first of which will be "Anne Frank Diary of a Young Girl." It will take place in the Charter Room. To register for book clubs or computer classes, call 685-4503 or stop by the research and information desk.

Feb. 7 – Teen Center Dance Party – 6-8pm
The Hanford Parks and Recreation will present Hanford Teen Center Dance Party at the Hanford Civic Auditorium featuring a DJ, a fully stocked snack bar; teen center games, big screen TV; foosball, hockey, basketball and more. Pre-purchased tickets $5, or $10 when purchased at the door. Only 100 openings for children grades 3 through 6. For information, visit ci.hanford.ca.us.

Feb. 8, 15 & 22 – Science Explorers
Every Saturday, ImagineU Interactive Children's Museum offers special programs for young scientists. The museum is located at 700 E. Main Street, Visalia. For information, visit imagineumuseum.org.

Feb. 11, 12 & 26 – YU-GI-OH
The Tulare Public Library invites young adults, ages 10-19, to sharpen their YU-GI-OH skills from 5-6 pm on Feb. 11 and 12. Then, play in a tournament from 5-7pm on Feb. 26.

Feb. 12 – 100th Day of School – 1 & 3pm
ValleyPBS at the Visalia Branch Library will present a Peg + Cat in celebration of the 100th Day of School and Lincoln's Birthday at the Visalia Branch Library, 200 W. Oak Ave. Two sessions will be held at 1pm and 3pm. Students are asked to bring 100 pennies for weights and measures games. They will also enjoy crafts, story time and an appearance by Clifford the Big Red Dog. Advance sign-ups to attend this special event are required; space is limited so reserve your spot today. Visit valleypbs.org/100days for more information.

Feb. 14 – Deadline to Register for Visalia Youth Baseball
The Visalia Parks and Recreation Department Youth Baseball program includes the Tiny Tots, Pee Wee, and Little Tykes leagues. Games are played at Riverway Sports Park. Register online at liveandplayvisalia.com.

Feb. 22 – Extreme Science Magic – 1-2pm
Kids' activities will take place every Saturday at the Tulare Public Library in the Olympic Room. Parents are encouraged to bring children for story time and a craft. Extreme Science Magic will occur in the Kids Space.

Feb. 24-28 – KCOE Spelling Bee
The Kings County Office of Education will host a Spelling Bee at Hanford Civic Auditorium, 400 N. Douty Street. The bee gives Kings County students the opportunity to qualify for the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. For information, contact Dee Tricks, Spelling Bee Coordinator, KCOE Lemoore Service Center, 589-7074.

COMMUNITY

February

Feb. 6 – Prostate Cancer Support Group – 3:30pm
Kaweah Delta Health Care District hosts this support group on the first Thursday each month at the Sequoia Regional Cancer Center. For information, call 624-3225.

Feb. 6 – Tulare Kings Mensa – 5:30pm
Tulare Kings Mensa, the high IQ society in the South Valley, will meet at Panera Bread, 4103 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia, at 5:30pm, for coffee, bagels, sandwiches and conversation. Prospective members encouraged to attend. For information, call 280-9774.

Feb. 6 – Cancer is Dinner Talk – 5:30pm
Kaweah Delta Health Care District hosts this support group on the first Thursday each month at the Sequoia Regional Cancer Center. For information, call 624-3225.

Feb. 6 – Visalia Philatelic Society Auction – 6:15pm
Visalia Philatelic Society will meet at the Fellowship Hall of Grace Lutheran Church, 1111 S. Conyer Street. Doors open at 6:15 for bidders to examine auction items. The meeting begins at 7pm with the auction starting at 7:30pm. A raffle is held during each auction. For information, call 686-5067 or 734-6353.

Feb. 7 – Central Valley Parkinson's Support Group – 10:30am–12pm
The Central Valley Parkinson's Support Group will meet at 5200 W. Caldwell Ave., Visalia (United Methodist Church). For information, visit cvpsg.org.

Feb. 7 – Exeter Woman's Club Card Party – 11:30am-3pm
The Exeter Woman's Club will have a card party. For information, call 592-6738.

Feb. 7 – YA Book Club – 6pm
Tulare Public Library's newest club will focus on young adult books. All ages are welcome. The YA Book Club will meet the first Friday of each month in the Charter Room. The discussion will be "Anne Frank Diary of a Young Girl." To register for book clubs or computer classes call 685-4503.

Feb. 8-9 – Carizo Plain and Morro Bay Field Trip
The Tulare Audubon Society will hold a birding caravan through Carrizo, by way of Kettleman City to view Pronghorn, Rough-legged Hawks, Golden Eagles, Pairie Falcons and more. For information, visit tularecountyaudubon.wix.com.

Feb. 8 – Second Saturday Book Club – 11am
The Second Saturday Book Club of the Tulare Public Library will meet in the Charter Room to discuss "Neverwhere," by Neil Gaiman. To register, call 685-4503 or stop by the Tulare Public Library's research and information desk.

Feb. 8 – Fly Navy Poker Tournament – 12-4pm
A Texas Hold 'Em Poker Tournament will be hosted by the NAS Lemoore Aviator Memorial Association at the Vineyard Inn, 819 E. Bush St., Lemoore. Tax-deductible donation of $100 includes appetizers, drink tickets and buy-in. Prizes will go to the top three finishers. For information, call 816-5114.

Feb. 9-18 – Water Safety Instructor Certification
The Visalia Parks and Recreation Department will offer instruction on water safety. Participants receive certification recognized by the Red Cross. Register at liveandplayvisalia.com.

Feb. 10 – Losm
The Loss of Spouse Support Group meets on the second and fourth Monday each month at Quail Park, 4520 W. Cypress Ave. For information, call 733-0642.

ART

February

Through Feb. 9 – Betty Berk Art Exhibit
Betty Berk is showing her latest painting series at the Ice House Theater. You can also view Berk's artwork at her gallery space at Sorenson's Studio in Fresno or one of her exhibits in the area throughout the year. To learn more, visit her website at bettyberk.com.

Through Feb. 22 – Tulare County: Varied Impressions
The Heritage Art Gallery at the Tulare County Historical Museum will display "Tulare County: Varied Impressions" through Feb. 22. For information, visit tularehistoricalmuseum.org.

Through Feb. 27 – Chicana Paintings Art Exhibit
The College of the Sequoias Art Gallery will exhibit the works of alumnus Crystal Galindo, "Multifacetica: Un Cambio de Paradigma" (Mutlifaced: A Paradigm Shift) from February 4-27. The gallery is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 11am-4pm and Thursdays from 11am-7pm. For information, call 737-4861 or visit cos.edu.

Through Feb. 28 – Sofa Art Reads a Good Book
Sofa Art Exhibit will be held at Arts Visalia Visual Art Center. For information, visit

THEATER

February

Feb. 6-9, 14-16 & 20-22 – The Drowsy Chaperone
Encore Theatre Company presents "The Drowsy Chaperone" at the Encore Theatre, 324 South N Street, Tulare. Advance tickets available. For information, visit tulareencoretheatre.org.

Feb. 7-9 – Respect
"Respect," a high-energy review of women in music from the early 1900s to the present, will be presented by The Visalia Players at The Ice House Theatre, located at the corner of Race and Santa Fe in Visalia. Evening performances are at 7:30pm on Feb. 7-8 and a matinee will be at 2pm on Feb. 9. For information, visit visaliaplayers.org.

Feb. 7-9, 14-16 & 21-22 – Sleeping Beauty
The Enchanted Playhouse presents "Sleeping Beauty." For information, visit enchantedplayhouse.org.

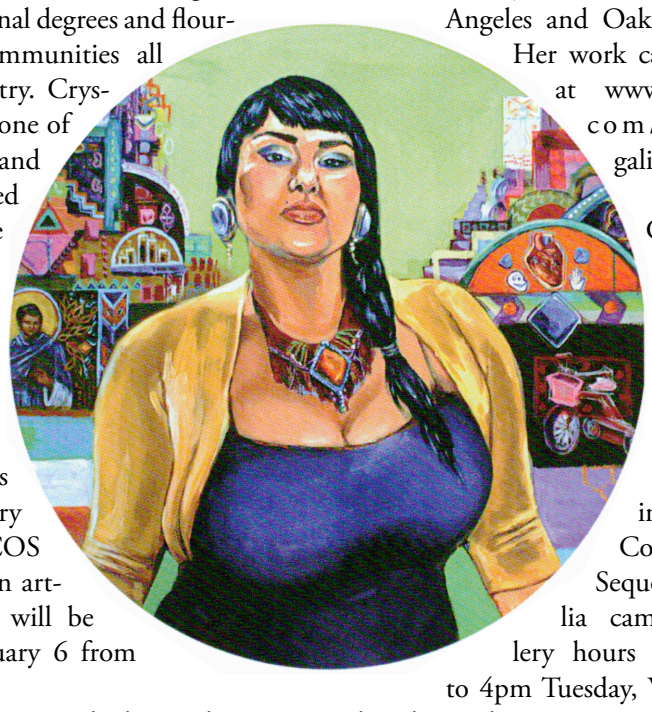
Feb. 6-8 – Mt. Whitney High School Presents Annie
The Tony award-winning musical "Annie" will be presented by Mt. Whitney High School at 7pm February 6-8 and at 2pm on Feb. 8 at the L.J. Williams Theater, 1001 W. Main, Visalia. Tickets will be available at the door.

See full calendar online: ourvalleyvoice.com

COS Artist Crystal Galindo Returns with 'Multifaceted' Exhibition

JESSICA ROBLES

The College of the Sequoias Art Department has a history of turning out numerous talented artists who go on to pursue additional degrees and flourish in art communities all over the country. Crystal Galindo is one of those artists, and she has returned to the place where her art career began with "Multifacetica: Un Cambio de Paradigma," which runs from February 4-27 at the COS Art Gallery. An artist's reception will be held on February 6 from 5-7pm.



The exhibition, which translates to "Multifaceted: A Paradigm Shift," features large, vibrant paintings that have a strong figurative presence against a backdrop of patterns, landscapes and iconic symbols important to the person being portrayed. Bright under-paintings and hybrids of Mesoamerican architectural structures express a mixture of identities and create a lavish psychological landscape with a strong Chicana presence.

Galindo, who was born and raised in Tulare County, graduated from College of the Sequoias in 2009 and then moved on to double major in painting and Chicano studies at Sonoma State University. She has had many exhibitions in the Los Angeles and Oakland areas. Her work can be seen at www.facebook.com/crystalgalindoart.

The COS Art Gallery is located in room 214 of the Kaweah Building on the College of Sequoias Visalia campus. Gallery hours are: 11am to 4pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, and 11am to 7 pm Thursday. For more information, call the COS Art Gallery at 737-4861 or visit the COS website at www.cos.edu.

Free parking is available during the night of the reception in parking lots 3 and 7. During the day, 20 minute free parking is available in lot 3 on the corner of Meadow Lane and Mooney Boulevard. Parking passes can be purchased for $2 in lots 3 and right outside lot 7.

Jessica Robles is the director of the College of the Sequoias Art Gallery.

Virginia Wilson's Photography on Display at Suncrest Bank

MARGIE RUEDA

Suncrest Bank in Visalia has joined the group of businesses participating in First Friday Art Walk. On Friday, February 7, from 6-8 pm, the bank will host a reception celebrating the opening exhibit of photographs by Virginia (Ginny) Wilson, whose Blue Ridge Photography images have become familiar in galleries and art shows throughout Tulare County.

Wilson's photographs in this exhibit reflect the county's agricultural base, along with views of historic towns and villages from travels in Europe. The collection also contains a few form/abstract images, such as reflections in water and glass.

Growing up on a farm in southwestern Michigan gave Wilson a sense of light in nature, the rhythms of the seasons, and the repeating patterns and forms of hills, trees and nearby lakes.

"My early work in photography was the high contrast drama of black and white," she said. "When I moved toward digital, I could see how easy it was to enter the world of color. Then I fell in love with the variety of shades and intensities one finds in nature when light comes through a flower, or shines on the edge of a leaf."

Wilson is a member of the Main Gallery, Arts Visalia and the Lindsay and Porterville Art Associations. She shows her work in their galleries, as well as the Spectrum Gallery in Fresno, where she is also a member.

The exhibit will run through Feb. 28. Suncrest Bank is located at 400 W. Center Ave. in downtown Visalia.

For more information on Wilson's upcoming exhibits, visit blueridgephoto.com.

Margie Rueda is co-chair of the Lindsay Art Association.

South Valley's Largest Home Show Returns to Visalia February 7-9

The 21st Annual Visalia Springfest – the South Valley's largest Home Show – returns to the Visalia Convention Center, February 7-9. Many new companies have joined this year's show, which features more 350 home and patio exhibits.

"This year we are proud to bring Steven Katkowsky, one of the most popular speakers at home and garden shows, to Springfest," said Steve Tarter, show manager.

Katkowsky has been designing and remodeling kitchens and bathrooms in the San Francisco Bay Area for more than 30 years. His presentations will include ways to increase storage space in kitchen/bath areas; how to add rooms in the garden; and reasons to reorganize oneself to a green lifestyle.

In addition, in the show's Seminar Area, pros from Master Gardeners, The Home Depot and Orchard Supply Hardware will teach how to do things like make modern mirrors, build simple workbenches, or even attract "the right" birds to the backyard.

On the Eucalyptus Courtyard, kids can join the Home Depot Team and build a craft to keep with a certificate of achievement, a workshop apron and commemorative pin.

Show hours are: Friday, from noon to 7pm; Saturday, 10am to 7pm; and Sunday, 10am to 5pm. General admission is $8 and senior admission (62+) is $6. Children under 12 are admitted free. Save $2 off general admission (only) when you bring a non-perishable food item to support Foodlink.

For more information, visit www.VisaliaHomeShows.com or call 713-4000.

Fantasy Doll Maker Debbie Martin to Discuss Her Art

The Visalia Art League's Artist Lecture series continues on Saturday, February 8, with a 3pm presentation by doll maker Debbie Martin at Arts Visalia, 214 E. Oak Ave., Visalia. The artist will review her personal inspirations, references and subject matter, and demonstrate doll-constructing techniques.

Martin's website, www.roostuff.com, welcomes viewers to "Roo's Fantasy Village," a special place where little fantasy creations take on a whimsical personality of their very own. In her imaginative world, trolls, imps, elves, ogres and fairies live in a place only she could create.

"I just like the whimsy of it all," she explained. "It takes me to another place mentally and emotionally. As my creatures start to evolve, the story begins and I enter a new and different world. I listen to my imagination and keep on creating. I escape into my own little place with my dolls."

Martin enjoys drawing, painting and photography. She began constructing her first dolls in 2003, and this is where her imaginative journey began. Martin credits the famous Danish doll maker Thomas Dam, who created the original troll dolls in 1959, as a major influence on her own unique sculptures.

The Roo doll heads are sculpted in clay and gently fired. Once the heads are cured, details are added and painted to accentuate the features. The dolls are constructed with soft materials and custom clothing. Each doll lives in its own imaginative world, with a fantastic story to be told to the viewer.

Martin advises artists trying to exhibit and sell their work to never stop learning new things or producing artwork. She also encourages artists to exhibit anywhere and everywhere their work is accepted, to enjoy creating art and to keep moving beyond their comfort zone.

She said being accepted as an artist in the art community has been a challenge for her at times. Sometimes her unique dolls, which have been exhibited in galleries, are seen as crafts and not accepted as art. However, she continues to show her Roo dolls in consignment shops and participating in local art shows.

"I do sell my work, but what's more important to me is when I see people look at a piece, smile, and really get it," Martin said. "I sell my work so I can support my clay addiction."

Martin will display several of her Roo dolls during the presentation for viewers to touch and hold. She will discuss and demonstrate her doll-sculpting techniques and costume-designing strategies, and share inspirational stories about her art.

Admission is free to Visalia Art League members and students, with a $5 suggested donation to others. For more information, call 739-0905.

‘Eleanor and Park’ Not a Nice Book

HANNAH GREEN

Eleanor and Park, by Rainbow Rowell, isn’t a nice book. It’s not supposed to be nice. As one of the protagonists, Park, would say, “It’s supposed to be art, and art isn’t supposed to be nice. It’s supposed to make you feel something.”

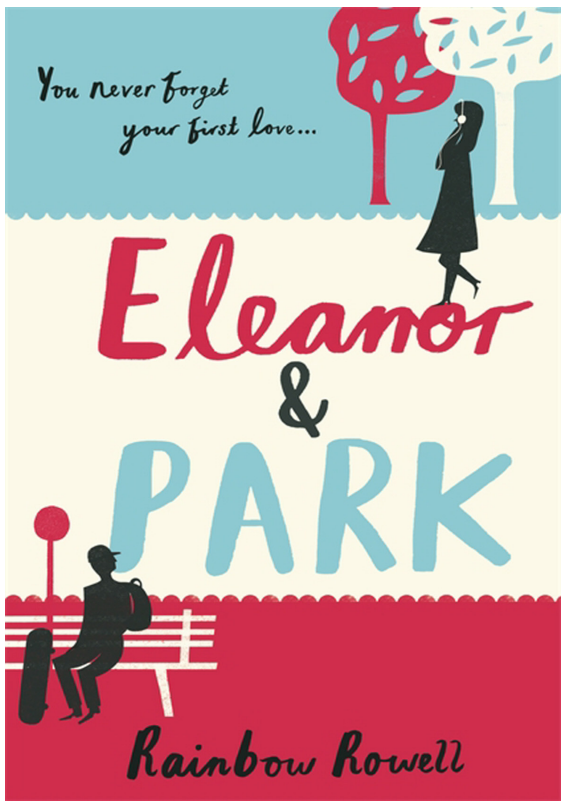
The reason we feel something with this novel is due to Rowell’s characters. Eleanor is a dual-protagonist novel in which the title characters meet on a bus on their way to high school, and throughout the year fall in love. They have everything in common—a love of music, sense of humor, growing attraction—but they lead antithetical lives. Park comes from a stable home life in which his parents are equitable partners, and the family’s love is easily evident in everything from their flowerboxes to their nightly dinners. Eleanor lives with her mother and stepfather, the latter making every moment of every day difficult and even dangerous for Eleanor, her four siblings and her mom. The characters are nuanced and plausible, and even teenagers today could easily connect with these two characters, who inhabit a mid-1980s world. In the end, Eleanor escapes from her wrecked home with Park’s help, and the novel ends with ambiguity as to the outcome of their relationship.

The fact of the matter is that if read shallowly, Eleanor could come across as a hero-saves-damsel novel. However, Eleanor is a protagonist in her own right: she is half of the narration, after all, and Rowell makes good use of small details, too. In particular, Eleanor rants against Hugh Hefner, and she and Park share conversations about the X-Men’s only women having superpowers like “thinking really hard” and “wearing spotless lingerie,” which lends a layer of feminism to Eleanor’s character. Her actions, too, decry the damsel theory: she alone decides to leave her stepfather’s house; she decides to go to her uncle, hitchhiking, and doesn’t seek Park’s approval for her plan. He does end up driving her off into the sunset, so to speak, but Eleanor accepts this as part of her own plan of escape. Park doesn’t formulate the entire escape plan and then enact it with Eleanor as a passive participant. It’s Rowell’s writing that moves the plot development from traditional hero story to something deeper and more significant.

Rowell writes with the certainty of an artist in the middle of her career. Eleanor is not self-conscious, and Rowell is clearly confident enough to lead the reader to a conclusion instead of pushing the reader over the brink, but I expect that Rowell is not yet at the apex of her career. However, for a second novel, Eleanor is done well. Some of her lines are truly beautiful, even peaceful, and would be even without the context of the greater novel. Little moments build deliberately until they crest, allowing the reader a growing sense of anxiety, understanding and falling in love along with the characters. In this way, we do not experience surprise at the plot developments, but we are not able to predict these events or grow bored, either.

The story structure is also sophisticated for the average teenage reader. Rowell opens with the end of the story, moves between protagonists for each chapter, and ends the story with a cryptic, unexplained note. These techniques, the latter in particular, might be difficult for an immature reading audience to appreciate. Eleanor actually falls right in the middle of its young adult genre: the themes are too adult for anyone younger than, say, 13—as the characters themselves point out, they don’t do anything in the back of the car that you couldn’t show in the movies, although at one point they are indeed in the back of a car—but the overall messages of hope and personal strength are geared toward those readers who are in the middle of an adolescent crisis themselves, unlike the more universally aimed YA novels, like John Green’s works, or J.K. Rowling’s. One particular point of contention for Eleanor is that she has an ample figure. Rowell uses her size as a means of furthering her message of hope and love. Eleanor obviously does not choose the weight she has (most nights her family doesn’t have a substantial enough amount of food for everyone to avoid feeling hungry) but she does not seek to lose weight, either. In this way, Rowell subtly fights the fat-shaming arguments that connect weight to personal choice and even morality. Park is also attracted to Eleanor because of her body, not in spite of it, encouraging young women to feel confident and worthwhile at any size, which is a brave message that runs contrary to the slew of fat-shaming that Eleanor—and teenagers today—experience.

The message of Eleanor and Park is clear: your dire teenage situation will get better. It might not be easy, and you might get hurt, but take care of yourself and, when you can, take care of others, too. You’ll make it out. Adults do not need to hear this. Adults who might read this presumably already escaped their adolescence and any harrowing situations experienced therein. To keep the message on point, Rowell doesn’t allow us to see Eleanor get to her adult years, or even to college, because teenagers with rough home lives and no college fund don’t get to skip merrily along to the golden dorm years. Sometimes, besieged teens have to leave behind an abused mother and sad siblings. Sometimes they have to live in a



relative’s house where they’re not entirely welcome, and sometimes the adults in whom they put their trust don’t become the Walton-esque caregivers the teen has never had. Eleanor is the everywoman, the patron saint of the American teenager. We see her struggle in order to pull through our own struggles, to know we are not alone, and to have hope.

This is a YA novel written specifically for young adults, using its adult themes as a way to reach out to a specific audience. Eleanor and Park have concerns that adults could classify as either trivial or significant, but to the protagonists, they are all significant—some are just more fleeting. Eleanor in particular worries that Park is a superhero, and she cannot live up to the awesomeness that being the partner of a superhero demands. But Eleanor shows us that we never see ourselves as we are. Neither Eleanor nor Park is a superhero at all. They’re simply ordinary teenagers who change their lives, in subtle and major ways. And that alone can be a heroic act when you’re sixteen.

Porterville College Foundation Hall of Fame Banquet Set for March 8

Tickets are on sale for the fourth annual Porterville College Foundation Hall of Fame Induction Banquet on March 8 at the River Island Country Club in Porterville. The event’s featured speaker will be Lupe Sanchez, former safety for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

The Alumni Hall of Fame recognizes former Porterville College students who have made outstanding contributions to both their professions and their communities. Induction is the highest honor given to alumni by the Porterville College Foundation.

Social hour is at 5:30pm and dinner will be served at 6:30pm. Tickets are $50, $275 for a table of six, and $350 for a table of eight. Seating is limited. For tickets or more information, call 791-2319 or 784-5300.

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“R” Ya Brave Enough to Eat the Gator, Frog Legs and Buffalo?

Sofa Art

Continued from p. 17

in other more professional manners.

The Sofa Art Show originated as a playful response to an unflattering, if admittedly tame criticism of Visalia's local art scene as described by a local newspaper writer. Varian Mace, then an art instructor at College of the Sequoias, shared the article with her classes and assigned a project in which her students created artworks in which sofas became the subject or protagonist of the images. This twist on the idea that art is often made to match one's sofa proved a fruitful and fun source of inspiration and the resulting projects were such a hit that folks decided to do it again the next year. Nineteen years later, to the surprise of everyone, not to mention the consternation of some, this silly art show continues to be incredibly popular.

In connection with the Sofa Art Show, Arts Visalia is again partnering with Pro-Youth/HEART for the "Art for HEART Auction," with proceeds from artwork sales going to raise money for after-school programs.

The exhibition runs from February 5-28. An opening reception will be held Friday, February 7, from 6-8pm. The Art for HEART auction event will be held on Friday, February 14, from 5-8pm. Attendance to of the all events is free and open to the public.

Arts Visalia is located at 214 E. Oak Ave. in downtown Visalia. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday, Noon to 5:30pm. For more information, call Arts Visalia at 739-0905 or visit www.artsvisalia.org.

Symphony

Continued from p. 17

began playing as a duo while at the camp.

They both joined the symphony in 2001. Doering became concertmaster in 2010. Both teach music at Fresno Pacific University and play with several other regional orchestras.

"We also have a chamber music series ('Musica Viva') which performs 10-20 concerts in the Central Valley and beyond," said Wulfhorst. "Our duo (The Emerald Duo) has been performing since 1986 in Europe and the Americas. We just returned in January from performing two different programs at the Durango Chamber Music Festival in Colorado. We also perform 15-20 chamber music concerts every summer in Europe."

Elegy by Fauré

Principal cellist Valerie Walden has performed "Elegy" with piano but has never had the opportunity to perform it with the richness of an orchestral accompaniment.

"I love to play this work because the audience response is so intense to the vocal qualities of the primary melody. The Elegy is in C minor, which is a key structure that highlights the natural overtones of the cello, making it easier to pull out the rich sound of the instrument. It is the tonal equivalent to very dark chocolate."

Principal cellist Valerie Walden

Walden has a Ph.D is from the University of Auckland, New Zealand. As an internationally recognized authority on cello history, she has lectured at regional and national conventions and has written a number of articles. She is an instructor at the College of the Sequoias and has been principal cellist of the Tulare County Symphony since 1986. She performs widely throughout the Central Valley and her private cello students have been selected for numerous state and national honor groups.

In November, Walden was in London for 10 days at the invitation of the London Cello Society. They were celebrating their 10th anniversary and invited her to write the main article for their newsletter and program, which celebrated Stradivari cellos. The celebration included a concert featuring seven Stradivari cellos played by their world class players.

'Horn Concerto No. 1 in C Minor' by Franz Strauss

Principal horn Elisha Wilson chose this horn concerto because the composer was a famous horn player, and he beautifully composed the piece to showcase the broad technical capacities of the horn, as well as the hauntingly beautiful melodic ways of the horn.

Principal horn Elisha Wilson

"The Concerto in C Minor" traces the familiar three-movement structure that is found within most concertos, but is truncated so as to form a single, extended movement with a central lyrical episode (the second movement). All the movements are to be played consecutively without pause, and were composed in such a way that there is an uninterrupted transition between each movement, which gently leads the listener down a path of complete engagement. The principal flute also plays a significant role in highlighting the horn melodies by dressing them with countermelodies periodically throughout the concerto.

In the third movement, The flute weaves its way into a duet with the horn, and following this nostalgic moment, the horn breaks into a virtuoso display of rapid tonguing and wide scale runs which continue as the orchestra also rises to the final statement of the opening theme.

Wilson has played with the symphony since 2004. She is the minister of worship and arts at University Presbyterian Church in Fresno and an adjunct lecturer and horn instructor at College of Sequoias as well as California State University, Stanislaus. In addition she is the music director and conductor for the Visalia Opera Company, which performed "The Marriage of Figaro" in October.

"Symphony No. 5" by Shostakovich

In 1937 Russia, at the height of Stalin's purges, the Communist Party strongly denounced Dmitri Shostakovich's most recent works. Fearing for his life, the young composer wrote a symphony ending with a rousing march. The work's traditional formal structure and direct musical language served to placate Stalin and the party. The first three movements are deeply tragic. The finale shatters the rapt stillness of the Largo (third movement) with a violent and brutish march.

Shostakovich was partially rehabilitated and the piece went on to become one of the most frequently played works of the 20th century. But to many, the triumph rang hollow. Experts are still deeply divided about what Shostakovich was trying to say. Was the symphony meant to celebrate Stalin's regime? Or did it contain hidden messages protesting the very system it seemed to support?

The symphony was hugely successful. The government was pleased that the rebel had knuckled under, while the Russian in the street saw the truth behind the facade. Western listeners, generally unaware of what was going on behind Stalin's mask, took the work at face value, yet were still overwhelmed by its grandeur and beauty. The symphony has become Shostakovich's most popular work, and the relatively recent revelation of its true meaning can only enhance our enjoyment of this testament to one man's struggle to express his people's anguish under a brutal tyrant.

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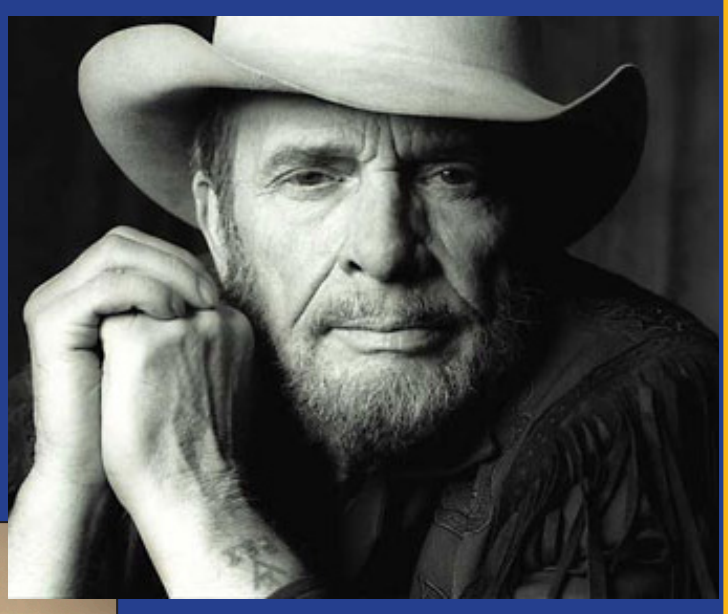

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